

SAVAGE ENCOUNTERS VILLAINS & LAIRS IV

THE DEAD, DAMNED, & DECAYING



Expand your game with unique villainous NPCs, lairs, and magic items for the world's greatest roleplaying game

VILLAINS & LAIRS IV

THE DEAD, DAMNED, & DECAYING

A SAVAGE ENCOUNTERS SUPPLEMENT

Version 1.0

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ABOUT THIS SUPPLEMENT

The Villains & Lairs supplements have been very successful. Thank you for your support with these projects!

When thinking about the next V&L supplement, I decided that a book of undead and fiendish NPCs would go over well. Based on the NPCs the writers created I don't think I was wrong. There are a lot of fantastic and inspiring NPCs in this supplement.

I hope you enjoy what the writers have created. I know I have!

Now – go play D&D!

- Jeff C. Stevens

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Happen to find an error? Have a villain CR question? If so, you can message me on Twitter (@jcorvinstevens) or send me an email: jeff@jeffstevensgames.com

THE ART

All of the images in this supplement come from stock art purchased from DriveThruRPG. Each artist is credited in each of the villains in which their work appears.

- Some artwork © 2015 Dean Spencer, used with permission. All rights reserved.
- Daniel Comerci – danielcomerci.com
- Some artwork © 2015 Eric Lofgren, used with permission. All rights reserved.
- Dyson Logos – maps can be found [here](#).

APL

APL refers to the Average Party Level. To calculate the APL, sum all the levels of the characters and then divide by the number of characters.

USING THIS CONTENT

Official Wizards of the Coast books referenced:

MM = 5th edition *Monster Manual*
PHB = 5th edition *Player's Handbook*
DMG = 5th edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*
VGtM = *Volo's Guide to Monsters*
MToF = *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*

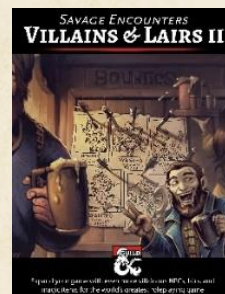
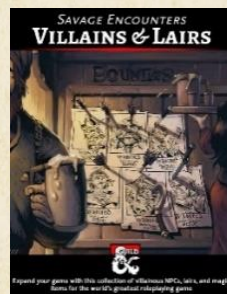
Unless otherwise noted, assume all NPCs have the stats of a **commoner (MM, p 345)**.

ADJUSTING THE VILLAINS

Although a stat block for most of the villains is included, you may wish to adjust them to make them fit in your own campaign. You could accomplish this by increasing the hit points of the villain, raising their Armor Class, or by adding feats or special traits. The latter can be found in Chapter 9: *Dungeon Master's Workshop of the Dungeons Master's Guide* (page 280).

DON'T HAVE THE ORIGINALS?

Haven't purchased the other *Villains & Lairs* supplements? Click on the image to be taken to the product page!



THE LONELY SOUL TAVERN

By: Jeff C. Stevens

Art: Luiz Prado

Map: Jean Lorber

The entry describes the tavern setting on the cover of this supplement.

Nestled in a dark alleyway, or behind a secret entrance, or in a decrepit, old ruin, you'll find the Lonely Soul Tavern—neutral ground where adventurers and evil creatures congregate. No fighting or magic can occur while within the tavern, though other business may transpire. To break that rule means one-on-one combat or a spin of the Wheel of Punishment.

BACKGROUND

Lonely Soul Tavern was created many years ago by a drow necromancer named Bal'daher'e. She was a little different than most necromancers in that she cared for her minions and creations. She felt sad when they were left alone, lost in the chaos that must be filling their undead minds. So, she created Lonely Soul Tavern.

While in the tavern, the undead may fraternize with one another, share stories, or hire adventurers. Most undead have seen a lot of things, and many hold secrets of lost fortunes, hidden altars, or other fantastic things. Some even want to acquire wealth themselves, hoping to procure healing magic to return them to their natural form—to be resurrected from this life of bone, drooping skin, or decay.

SPEAKING DEAD

While in the tavern, most undead have the ability to speak Common, even if they don't have the ability to speak. This effect ends when the creature leaves the tavern. In addition, all creatures in the tavern have a Wisdom and Intelligence of at least 10.

OCCUPANTS OF THE LONELY SOUL

The following NPCs are always found within the Lonely Soul Tavern:

Angelica. A four-armed **flesh golem** (CR 5; MM, p 169) wearing a lovely fitted dress. Aside from her extra appendages and rotting flesh, which she covers heavily with jasmine-scented oil, she's an attractive woman in undead terms with a Charisma of 14. She is the tavernkeep, main tender of the bar, and the one to speak to when inquiring about a room.

Angelica was placed here by Bal'daher'e, and cursed to never leave the tavern. She's okay with this. She knows what happens when undead leave the tavern. She's seen and heard a lot during her century in the tavern and may have information to share with inquiring adventurers.

Happy. A green-glowing, halfling **skeleton** (CR ¼; MM, p 272 with the *Lucky* trait). Happy is, well, happy. Though he has no facial tissue or muscles with which to smile, Happy smiles. The halfling was a prankster in real life, often hiding under tables to tie someone's laces together, adding a dash of hot sauce to another's drink or meal, or placing a tack in someone's chair as they began to sit. Never any vicious tricks, but little pranks. Happy continues these actions in his undeath.

Happy can't speak but he can understand Common, Halfling, and Elvish. He communicates by writing in the air, his green glow lingers for a few seconds, like a sparkling firework when waved about in the dark.

If asked about his green glow, he writes, "It's a prank gone wrong that I'd rather not talk about." This prank was the end of Happy, which is why he glows now.

Meadstein. Meadstein is a naked human **ghast** (CR 2; MM, p 148). While in the tavern, he loses his *stench* trait. Meadstein sees no need for clothing or armor. He's been here nearly as long as Angelica and his true name is forgotten. He now goes by his nickname Meadstein as he is always seen chugging a magical, ever-filled stein of mead, even though the liquid pours over his jawless mouth, down his chest, and onto the floor. If you don't want your boots covered in mead, you don't want to be near Meadstein when he drinks.

Persimmons. A **zombie** (CR ¼; MM, p 316) wearing a dirty and tattered white dress. Her left eye dangles from its socket and her blonde hair is a birds' nest, literally adorned with a robin's nest and three pale-blue eggs.

Before her passing, Persimmons was a lovely young woman who often flirted with strangers. She still does.

The Masses. Six human skeleton heads rest in a hanging candelabra near the wanted posters. The Masses know the history of the wanted, but don't share the information freely. Good, lively entertainment is scarce in the tavern, so they request a joke, dance, song, or story in exchange for information. They're a bit crass, often use foul language, make rude jokes, and laugh in unison.

Bulgrat. A brutish tiefling with deep red skin, cloven hooves, and wicked, black horns. Unlike most of the patrons in the tavern, Bulgrat is still alive. It's just that he looks so much like an actual demon that no one in the living world wants to befriend him. He finds company and acceptance here and is more than happy to chat with living adventurers. He may even join the party for a brief time is asked.

THE WHEEL OF PUNISHMENT

The *Lonely Soul Tavern* is a safe place for the living and undead. Occasionally, however, tempers can get the best of anyone and scuffles break out. When this occurs, the tavern bouncers, three **vampire spawn** (CR 5; MM, p 298) named Boom, Shaka, and Laka, manifest in the tavern, apprehend those engaged in the scuffle, and drag them to the Wheel of Punishment, located on the wall near the bar. Each of the accused must spin the wheel and complete their punishment.

Scuffles between individuals may be resolved as one-on-one combat in the fighting pit. Otherwise, each creature spins the wheel and accepts its own punishment.

To represent the spinning of the wheel, roll a d6 and consult the table below:

| D6 | PUNISHMENT | DEFINITION |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | <i>Smack Down</i> | The individual must battle a clay golem (CR 9; MM, p 168) in the fighting pit. |
| 2 | <i>Cute & Cuddly</i> | The individual is placed in a held state for 2d4 hours, teleported to the fighting pit, and covered with 50 kittens which manifest out of thin air. |
| 3 | <i>Cage Match</i> | The individual must battle 12 skeletons (CR ¼; MM, p 272) in the fighting pit. |
| 4 | <i>Ghoul Time</i> | The creature becomes a ghoul (CR 1; MM, p 148) for 6d6 hours, retaining their INT and WIS scores. |
| 5 | <i>Forget About It</i> | The creature forgets everything that occurred within the last 2d10 hours. |
| 6 | <i>Better Off Dead</i> | A virus is magically implanted in the creature, who suffers the <i>poisoned</i> condition for 2d4 hours while they battle intestinal issues. An undead creature with this punishment is granted life for the time but suffers the same effect. |

ROOMS & FOOD & DRINK

A modest room with a full-size straw bed can be rented for 5 sp per day. Food, though occasionally not palatable by the living (i.e. rotting corpses or carcasses) is offered at the rate of 3 sp.

An assortment of beverages is available. When the Lonely Soul Tavern was created, the casks were imbued with magic, making them never-ending sources of refreshment. As such, all beverages cost 1 sp.

AREA 1) THE CEMETERY GATE

From the outside, the Lonely Soul Tavern appears as an old cemetery with a 6-foot-tall wrought iron fence. An unlocked archway gate, with a rusty and corroded sign that reads *Lonely Soul Cemetery* hanging above it, is used to enter the tavern.

Opening the gate reveals the true exterior of this area. When opened, a creature standing in the gateway sees several large buildings, instead of the old cemetery.

Read or summarize:

After opening the gate, the landscape changes. No longer do you see an old, unkempt cemetery. Instead, a large building stands only 15 feet from you. An alleyway, lined with black roses and tangled vines, separates it from a narrower structure to the right.

A sign dangles above the alley's entrance, reading *This Way to the Lonely Soul Tavern*.

AROUND THE BUILDING

The area outside the buildings is covered in black rose bushes and tangled vines.

ARRIVING CUSTOMERS

Adventures who wait too long to enter the tavern may encounter an undead customer, which ignores them and enters the tavern.

AREA 2 MAIN LOBBY

As the party enter Area 1, read or summarize:

The door opens to a large room filled with dim blue and green light. A chandelier containing skulls hangs in the center. Several round tables and chairs are placed in front of a glowing blue fireplace, and four longer tables with benches occupy the center.

Patrons fill the tavern, though, many appear to have recently risen from the grave.

Several undead patrons chat with one another, telling stories of failed turnings and near undeath escapes.

The blue fire emanating from the fireplace creates a soothing heat, one that warms deep and to the bones.

AREA 3 KITCHEN

The kitchen is filled with rancid meat, grubs, worms, pickled eyes, and a humanoid limb or two. Another blue fireplace is in this room, next to which is a large cask filled with cured meats for the living who happen to enter the establishment.

AREA 4 THE BAR

Either Jasmine or one of her skeleton wait staff tend the bar. The skeletons understand Common and Elvish, but they can't talk. Instead, they chatter their teeth and use body language and head movement to speak with customers.

An assortment of beverages is available. When the Lonely Soul Tavern was created, the casks were imbued with magic, making them never-ending sources of refreshment. As such, all beverages cost 1 sp.

BOUNTIES

Several Wanted signs (see Bounties) and a large wheel (see Wheel of Punishment) hang on the west wall.

CHANDELIER OF SKULLS

A chandelier made of bones and filled with skulls hangs in front of the bar and Wanted wall (see The Masses).

AREA 5 PORTALS

Each of the colored portals leads to a different area or realm. Many of the undead use these portals to quickly reach the tavern. The portals may open wherever you wish, giving you an easy way to incorporate some of the suggested villain quests.

AREA 6 PRIVY

Three chairs, each with a chamber pot attached to the underside, are located in small rooms with doors that open inward. These restrooms are seldom used by the undead. Though, Handersnatch the Zombie likes to sit in one of the stalls while reading his old, crumpled copy of the vintage basic *Dungeons & Dragons* book. If interrupted, he moans and kicks the door closed.

AREA 7 SLEEPING AREAS

Each of these rooms contain a small bed fitted with moldy and dusty blankets, a chamber pot, and a nightstand. Each room sleeps two Medium-sized creatures comfortably.

SIGWERTH THE ATTENDANT

A **ghoul** (CR 1; MM, p 148) named Sigwerth moans while roaming these halls. He's the steward of the sleeping areas, in charge of making certain guests have what they need for a happy and pleasant stay. He carries small bars of soap and fresh towels, repeatedly handing them to passersby whenever he sees them. Sigwerth is also in charge of emptying the chamber pots, which he does whenever he likes.

7A: GAMBLING DEAD

The undead seldom sleep. On occasion, several undead and fiends use these rooms to play games of chance: cards, dice, or pull the limb from the zombie.

7B: STORAGE CLOSET

The mixed scents of rotting meat and lavender seep from below this small storage closet's door.

Inside are extra towels, bed linens, chamber pots, and scented hand soaps. Hidden behind a stack of towels is Sigwerth's snack—a decaying humanoid arm.

7C: IVETTE BELLADONNA

This room is lined with tall shelves, each stocked with a variety of card and board games. An undead elf **mage** (CR 6; MM, p 347), Ivette Belladonna, sits at a small, circular table, waiting for someone to play a game with her. She's been waiting for a very long time.

If a creature agrees to play a game with her, Ivette goes to the shelves and selects a game. This can be any game that you have available to you.

If a creature plays a game with Ivette, she reaches into her *bag of holding* and gives them an uncommon magic item, potion, scroll, or a small purple bag of 25 gp. If a creature wins the game, she gives them two of these items.

7D: INGRID RABBITFOOT

An old, wrinkly human woman (**druid**; CR 2; MM, p 346) lives in this room. Ingrid Rabbitfoot lost her eyesight years ago. Age can do that to a person. She's found tending an empty copper birdcage. Ingrid's bird, a robin whose song sounded more like a sneeze, flew away several years ago. She keeps the cage neat and proper, hoping her bird *Gesundheit* returns. The fact is, Segwirth snatched the bird in the middle of the night many years ago, while exchanging chamber pots.

Ingrid desperately wants a bird—her druid nature misses taking care of a creature. If the party find her a new bird, she'll reward them with a *wand of web*, which she keeps hidden under her mattress.

AREA 8 FIGHTING PIT

Bleachers line this large 10-foot-deep pit. A small pool, resembling mud, can be seen in the middle of the pit.

This is the fighting pit. Though killing is against the rules of the establishment, nonlethal fighting isn't. This pit is used to settle wagers, prove who is better, resolve disputes, and host punishments for those who don't follow the rules (see Wheel of Punishment).

FIGHTING PIT DAMAGE

Any creature in the establishment may challenge another, and bets may be placed. While in the fighting pit, magic makes all damage nonlethal and counters any attempt at turning undead. A creature attempting to leave this plane of existence is instead teleported to the ceiling, falls 30 feet, suffers 3d6 bludgeoning damage, and lands prone, unless it has a means to avoid the damage.

THE MUD POOL

The mud pool is a chaotic variable which no creature controls. When combat beings in the fighting pit, the mud pool decides what it will become. Roll a d6 and consult the following table:

| D6 | MUD PIT OUTCOME |
|----|---|
| 1 | The mud pool becomes a Roper (CR 5; MM, p 261), attacking any creature within range. |
| 2 | The mud pool transforms into a 15-foot spherical mass of spider webs. The mass has the properties of the <i>web</i> spell. |
| 3 | The mud pool transforms into a black pudding (CR 4; MM, p 241), attacking any creature within range. |
| 4 | The mud pool transforms into a 15-foot-tall marble boulder. |
| 5 | The mud pool transforms into a lava pool, spewing chunks of molten debris into the air. At the end of each creature's turn, roll a d6. On a result of 5 or 6, each creature must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 3 (1d6) fire damage as it is struck by molten debris. |
| 6 | The mud pool transforms into a clay golem (CR 9; MM, p 168), which bumbles around the pit attacking at random. At the start of its turn, roll a d6. On a 1-3, the golem focuses its attention on any undead in the pit. On a result of 4-6, the golem focuses its attention on any living creature in the pit. |

After the battle concludes, the golem crawls back to its point of origin and reverts to the mud pool.



BOUNTIES

Several portraits are attached to a notice board. Each of these individuals is wanted for some reason or another. Any undead patron of the tavern may have a bounty on one or more of these wanted criminals.



Jala'mar. A human **paladin** (blackguard; VGtM; CR 8, p 211) of Ilmater. He's a crass and arrogant man, who boasts about his undead slaying. He's often found in taverns, surrounded by onlookers who listen to his stories of grand battles with the damned and undead.



Joliet. A half-elf **war priest** (CR 9; VGtM, p 218) of Lathander. This goody-two-shoes of a holy person has sent many an undead friend of the tavern to their eternal rest.



Toll'do. Once an evil **master thief** (CR 5; VGtM, p 216), Toll'do found religion and now hunts the undead, using his thief abilities to sneak up on them. Toll'do and his holy dagger, known as the Tooth of Helm, are feared throughout the undead community.



Abraham. A human **priest** (CR 2; MM, p 348) who has vowed to rid the world of undead scum. His holy book, which he calls Suffering, has smacked more than one undead creature to eternal death.



Porg. An elf paladin of Ilmater. Porg and his sacred hammer have defiled more than their fair share of ghosts, ghouls, and zombies. Someone needs to put a stop to his madness.

BULGRAT

Large humanoid (tiefling), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) |

Skills Perception +7

Damage Resistances fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Infernal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Charge. If Bulgrat moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Innate Spellcasting. Bulgrat's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell Save DC 14). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *thaumaturgy*

1/day each: *darkness*, *hellish rebuke* (2nd level)

Reckless. At the start of his turn, Bulgrat 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

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d12 + 4) slashing damage.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

SUFFERING

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement by a cleric or paladin)

An ancient leather-bound tome. The interior pages are filled with illuminated script in Celestial.

This magical book functions as a club. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon.

While wielding it, you can use a bonus action to cast one of the following spells:

1/day: *searing smite*, *thunderous smite*

In addition, while attuned to the book, you can read, write, and understand Celestial.

TOOTH OF HELM

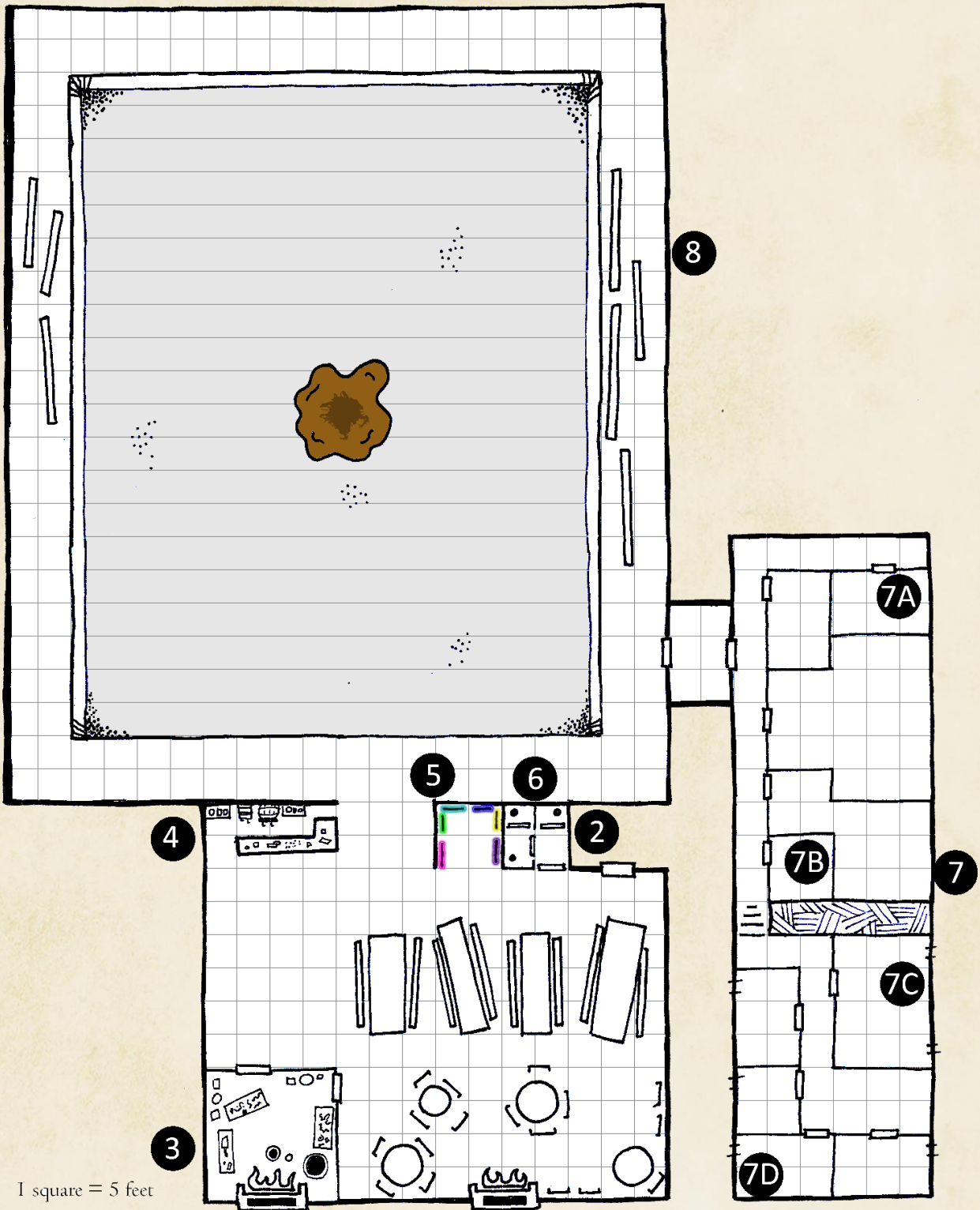
Weapon (dagger), rare

An unpolished dagger made of dingy iron.

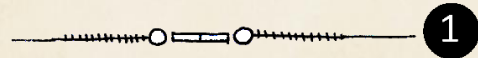
You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. On a hit with this weapon, the target takes an additional 1d6 radiant damage.

Eater of the Undead. Against undead enemies, the dagger's bonus to attack and damage rolls increases to +2, and the extra radiant damage to 2d6.

THE LONELY SOUL TAVERN



1 square = 5 feet



ALSAYNNE DUBEAU

By: Jessica Marcrum

Artist: Purple Duck Games: Gary Dupuis

Alsaynne Dubeau is a Cleric of Life who refused to die when her time came. Relying on her holy book Service as a kill list, she continues to reap souls for the greater glory of her god.

BACKGROUND

Alsaynne Dubeau was once a human Cleric of Life who grew bitter with the way most of her fellow mortals wasted their short lives on what she considered pointless activities instead of devout worship. She became obsessed with the idea of extending life of the deserving and her research led her to transform herself into a lich. Seeing this as the one true way to worship her deity indefinitely, she rejoiced at having found the key to immortality.

Around the time that Alsaynne created and hid her phylactery, she noticed that names began to appear in her holy book weekly. Those named in her book were always in dire need of help. Alsaynne viewed them as those who had carelessly wasted the gift of life and saw it as her solemn duty to reap them. She now relies on her book as a hit list and is vigilant in her work. Her deity is furious.

Ever cautious of causing too much pain to those she reaps, Alsaynne has a weapon of her own devising, which she calls Faith, that helps those struck with it learn to accept their fate. She takes no pleasure in her work, viewing it as a continuation of the vow she made when she first became a cleric. She has given up asking why her deity has stopped answering her prayers, now taking it as confirmation that her actions are correct. After all, if she were in the wrong, her deity would certainly tell her to stop, wouldn't they?



CURRENT MOTIVES

Alsaynne Dubeau moves throughout the world to reap the names that appear weekly in her holy book. She is intent on finding her targets and killing them before the next group of names appears. Having a backlog is terribly inconvenient.

Alsaynne can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Villain.** She appears when the party is in great danger and tries to reap them.
- **A Quest Target.** Alsaynne's deity is infuriated by her actions and may ask the party to stage an intervention.
- **A Healer.** Alsaynne only kills those on her list and is still a powerful Life Cleric. She may be called upon to heal those in need, provided they are worthy.

- **A Travel Guide.** Alsaynne is always on the move. If adventurers prove their worth to her, she may allow them to travel with her as she goes to reap her next victim.
- **A Religious Leader.** Alsaynne may share her love of her deity in an unusual way, but she is deeply devoted to her faith and eager to spread the gospel. She attempts to convert any undergoing a crisis of faith.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Alsaynne plans to serve her deity in this fashion for the rest of eternity, but she does grow weary of travel. She would like to find a way to make the unworthy appear in her home, instead of having to travel so much. In the meantime, she is learning *teleportation* magic.

FLAWS

To the outside world, Alsaynne is utterly convinced that she is right and cannot be dissuaded. Deep down, she worries that she is angering her deity by killing instead of preserving life. She is terrified that she has strayed far from the path, but feels it is too late to change her ways.

ALSAYNNE ON THE MOVE

Alsaynne travels to the location of the names in her book and can therefore be found anywhere, though always when the target is in great need.

FAITH

Weapon (Pike), very rare

The pike glows with an almost soothing energy, as if to tell a supplicant that the end of their suffering is nigh.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magical weapon.

On a successful hit, the target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, roll a d6 and consult the below table. The target loses 1 point from that ability score.

- 1-2: Intelligence
- 3-4: Wisdom
- 5-6: Charisma

1 lost point can be restored by a long rest, *greater restoration*, *heal*, or *wish*. A combination of these may be required if more than 1 point was lost.

SERVICE

Wondrous Item, very rare (requires attunement by a cleric)

The ancient leather-bound parchment is filled with crossed out names, yet more appear every week.

Alsaynne's holy book is filled with prayers, psalms, and songs that eventually give way to a long list of crossed out names. New names of people in need appear weekly.

Alsaynne Dubeau

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +10, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +18, History +12, Insight +9, Religion +18, Perception +9

Damage Resistance cold, lightning, necrotic

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

Condition Immunities charmed, exhausted, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Celestial, Dwarvish, Elvish, Gnomish, Orcish

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

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

Preserve Life: As an action, Alsaynne can choose any creatures within 30 feet of her and divide 90 hit points among them. This feature can restore a creature to no more than half of its hit point maximum.

Blessed Healer. When Alsaynne casts a spell of 1st level or higher that restores hit points to a creature, she regains hit points equal to 2+ the spell's level.

Divine Strike. Once on each of her turns when she hits a creature with a weapon attack, Alsaynne can cause the attack to deal an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage to the target.

Spellcasting. Alsaynne is an 18th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric and wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

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

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, fireball, lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, dimension door*

5th level (3 slots): *beacon of hope, cloudkill, revivify, scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate, globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *death ward, finger of death, guardian of faith, plane shift*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster, power word stun*

9th level (1 slot): *mass cure wounds, power word kill, raise dead*

Supreme Healing. Alsaynne uses the highest number possible for each die when restoring hit points with spells.

Turn Resistance. Alsaynne has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 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

Faith – Pike +2. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d10 + 10) piercing damage. Upon being hit by Faith, the target's Intelligence, Charisma, and Wisdom is reduced by 1.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Alsaynne 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. Alsaynne regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Cantrip. Alsaynne casts a cantrip.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions) Alsaynne uses her Paralyzing Touch.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Alsaynne must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BEZUUL

By: Andy Dempz

Artist: Claudio Casini

A middle manager and petty leader of the least of Hell's legions. Obsequious and arrogant, displeasing and dangerous.

BACKGROUND

The bureaucracy of Hell has a reputation as a cruelly effective meritocracy, where the worthless exist as shapeless lemures or slothful nupperibos until one shows enough promise to be promoted. This system is supposed to ensure that its upper ranks are filled with the strong, the devious, and those who understand the value of order and domination. But not every devil is fit to rise up the ranks. Some, like Bezuul, are promoted to the limits of their ability and ambition, and there they remain, seething with resentment as others pass them by.

Bezuul is an amnizu, the leaders of the infernal legions and those responsible for molding the newly arrived lemures and finding potential among them. But Bezuul prefers the company of the nupperibos and bears some physical similarity to those pathetic souls who exist only as shuffling hordes of mindless appetites. Bezuul has found his ideal niche with them, bullying the simple creatures and feeding his own ego with delusions of what a grand legion he commands.

As in his former life, he resents his superiors but lacks both the talent and motivation to rise any higher in the hierarchy. Despite this, or contrary to it, he thinks he deserves better while viciously defending his position from other desirous devils. He fawns on those above him in the infernal ranks and spits on those below him, all while privately maintaining an acrid hatred for those that rise above him.



CURRENT MOTIVES

Bezuul commands a vast horde of nupperibos, herding them into battle on the plains of Avernus.

Bezuul can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Enemy Commander.** The adventurers' path may be blocked by Bezuul's horde and they need to either defeat or negotiate with him to get past.
- **An Informant.** Bezuul resents his peers and superiors and will share information about them if he thinks the characters might use it in a way that would benefit him.
- **A Giver of Questionable Aid.** Bezuul may be inclined to sweeten any deals made by providing an item that is beneficial at first but detrimental in the end like *flies in the ointment*.
- **A Provider of Unpleasant Sanctuary.** Bezuul receives few regular visitors and may provide respite from the harsh

environs of the Hells to a party of adventurers who can carry out tasks for him (and who can tolerate the nupperibos and flies). He is particularly interested in damning information on his rivals.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Bezuul lacks the real ability and ambition needed to move up in the hierarchy of Hell. He dreams of it, but he lacks the will to put his desires into action.

He wants the respect of his peers and superiors, but it isn't likely to come as long as his commanding role is limited to directing a tide of nupperibo bodies.

FLAWS

Bezuul's vanity and bloated sense of self-importance make him vulnerable to flattery. He can easily be misled by someone he thinks he'll be able to take advantage of.

If he realizes he has been tricked and used, his rage and embarrassment may compound his condition by continuing the sequence of poor decisions.

FLIES IN THE OINTMENT

Wondrous item, rare

This black and red tin, 3 inches in diameter, contains 1d4 + 1 doses of a thick mixture that smells faintly of rotting meat. The tin and its contents weigh 1/2 pound.

As an action, one dose of the ointment can be swallowed or applied to the skin. The creature that receives it regains 2d8 + 2 hit points, ceases to be poisoned, and is cured of any disease.

When the last dose is used, swarming, biting flies fill a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the user. The sphere spreads around corners. The sphere remains for the duration, and its area is lightly obscured. The sphere's area is difficult terrain.

When the area appears, each creature in it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 4d10 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature must also make this saving throw when it enters the spell's area for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there.



BEZUUL

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 21 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 202 (27d8 + 81)

Speed 30 ft, 40 ft. fly.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 20 (+5) | 12 (+1) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +9, Wis +7, Cha +10

Skills Perception +7

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Infernal, telepathy 500 ft.

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Cloud of Vermin. Any creature, other than a devil, that starts its turn within 20 feet of Bezuul must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. A creature within the areas of Bezuul and one or more nupperibos makes the saving throw with disadvantage. On a failure, the creature takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the Bezuul's darkvision.

Hunger-Driven. In the Nine Hells, Bezuul and the nupperibos can flawlessly track any creature that has taken damage from Bezuul's Cloud of Vermin within the previous 24 hours.

Innate Spellcasting. Bezuul's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks). Bezuul can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *charm person, command*

3/day each: *dominate person, stinking cloud*

1/day each: *dominate monster, maze*

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Bezuul uses Poison Mind. It also makes two attacks: one with its flail and one with its Disruptive Touch.

Taskmaster Flail. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 33 (6d10) force damage.

Disruptive Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 44 (8d10) necrotic damage.

Poison Mind. Bezuul targets one or two creatures that it can see within 60 feet of it. Each target must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or take 26 (4d12) necrotic damage and be blinded until the start of the Bezuul's next turn.

Forgetfulness (Recharge 6). Bezuul targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. That creature must succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw or become stunned for 1 minute. A stunned creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target is stunned for the full minute, it forgets everything it sensed, experienced, and learned during the last 5 hours.

REACTIONS

Instinctive Charm. When a creature within 60 feet of Bezuul makes an attack roll against it, and another creature is within the attack's range, the attacker must make a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker must target the creature that is closest to it, not including Bezuul or itself. If multiple creatures are closest, the attacker chooses which one to target. If the saving throw is successful, the attacker is immune to the Bezuul's Instinctive Charm for 24 hours.

BONDHUNTERS

By: Jessica Ross

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Your word is your bond, and a broken bond is a death sentence.

BACKGROUND

Bondhunters begin unlife in one of two ways: either a creature who obsessively sought out bonds and never broke one in life, or they were a liar and fiend who constantly broke promises, and were killed for their lies. However a creature becomes a Bondhunter, they have a singular focus: to ensure any bond made is kept, no matter the cost.

While many Bondhunters can be assuaged simply by someone fulfilling their contract, some lies and broken promises are too big to be forgiven. If a broken promise is big enough, a Bondhunter may attempt to kill the one who broke their word and turn them into a Bondhunter as punishment.

When a Bondhunter acts as a witness to a promise, they use a piece of their rope to bind the promise makers while they make their agreement. The Bondhunter then carries that rope with them, and if the promise is broken, they use that rope to garrote the offending party. If a Bondhunter kills someone in this way, their spirit is trapped in the rope and they become a Bondhunter, continuing the cycle.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Bondhunters seek to create and fulfill bonds. They do not make promises they can't keep, and they can be convinced to seek out those who don't keep their word to punish them.

Bondhunters can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Assassin or Bounty Hunter.** If Bondhunters know of someone who broke a promise, they hunt them down. Someone



who knows of a Bondhunter's motivations could trick or manipulate someone into making an unkeepable promise and then send a Bondhunter after them as an unwitting assassin.

- **A Deal Broker or Consultant.** Due to their unwavering loyalty to kept promises and thoughtful consideration of deals, Bondhunters make excellent consultants when someone wants to make a deal. They see through loopholes and lies and narrow in on the heart of a contract, attempting to make it as fair and attainable as possible for all parties involved.
- **An Informant.** Bondhunters' only concern is that all promises made are kept. If a promise is within their power to keep, they have no qualms about making a deal with

anyone who asks. Likewise, unless an agreement specifies it can't be revealed, a Bondhunter may make a deal with someone else to reveal the details of another. As such, these damned spirits can be useful informants—as long as someone asks the right questions.

- **A Quest Giver.** Though Bondhunters care about all bonds—from the most extreme broken promise to the smallest twisted word—they don't always have time to seek out every creature who breaks a bond. When this happens, a Bondhunter might ask someone else who has proven themselves worthy of the task to seek out a bond-breaker and punish them accordingly.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Any creature whose spirit becomes a Bondhunter seeks first to ensure everyone fulfills their bonds, but they also want to be put to rest. They must make and fulfill bonds or be the arbiter of kept promises in their unlife, and the number of bonds they must keep depends on how they became a Bondhunter.

A Bondhunter who obsessively kept their word in life doesn't typically have broken promises left unfulfilled after death, so they must simply ensure others keep their word. Making and keeping more promises helps them accomplish this more quickly, but since they were already so dedicated to keeping their word in life, they would likewise be careful about the promises they make as Bondhunter. They must fulfill $1d100 \times 100$ bonds to move on.

A Bondhunter who broke their word in life and became a Bondhunter as a punishment (or because another Bondhunter killed them and turned them into one) must fulfill $1d100 \times 1000$ bonds to be put to rest. If they break a promise or bond as Bondhunter, $1d100$ new bonds are added to this debt.

FLAWS

While Bondhunters are typically impassive and level-headed when making deals, their focus can become single-minded and all-consuming when someone breaks their word. When a Bondhunter zeroes in on a liar, they are sometimes reckless in their pursuit. They would never attempt to make a deal while in this state, but they might unwittingly break a deal already made if it gets in the way of their target. If this happens, they become desperate to make up for their broken deal and might be manipulated into making an unfavorable promise in this state.

BONDED ROPE

Weapon (whip) +2, very rare (requires attunement)

The Bondhunter uses the tendrils of rope making up its own form as weapons.

You gain a +2 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The whip has 5 charges. While attuned to it, you may use an action and expend one or more of its charges to:

- Cast *bane* (1 charge).
- Cast *zone of truth* (2 charges).
- Cast *hold person* (2 charges).

The rope regains all expended charges when you finish a long rest. Any rope used to make up a Bondhunter's body can be used as Bonded Rope.

If someone binds their hands to someone else's with Bonded Rope while making a deal or promise, they become an immediate target of Bondhunters upon breaking their word.

BONDHUNTERS

Large undead, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 161 (14d10 + 84)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 17 (+3) | 19 (+4) | 19 (+4) | 17 (+3) |

Saving Throws Cha +8, Int +9,

Skills Insight +9, Intimidation +8, Investigation +9, Perception +9, Persuasion +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Any languages it knew in life

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Broken Bonds (3/Day). As a bonus action after a successful attack with its Bonded Rope, a Bondhunter can wrap their rope around a target, requiring them to make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 2d6 psychic damage for the lies they've told.

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

Undead Nature. The Bondhunter doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bondhunters make three attacks with their Bonded Ropes.

Bonded Rope +2. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 5) slashing damage, plus 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a critical hit.

REACTIONS

Compelled Culpability. If a Bondhunter takes psychic damage, it reacts by swiping out with its ropes. Everyone within 20 ft. must make a DC 16 Dex saving throw. On a save, they take 8 (1d4 + 6) slashing damage as the ropes whip by them. On a fail, the rope grabs them and they are restrained until the start of the Bondhunter's next turn. While they are restrained by the Bonded Rope, the voices of everyone they've ever lied to echo in their mind. The target must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. They take 3d6 psychic damage on a failed save and become frightened of the Bondhunter. On a successful save, they take half as much damage and do not become frightened.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Bondettes (3/Day). A Bondhunter can release a rope from its body to create a smaller version of itself to do its bidding. Bondettes use the stats of **ghouls** with the addition of *Undead Fortitude*, and they use the bonded rope as their weapons. Bondettes attempt to grapple targets who have less than half of their health for their Bondhunter to deal with at their discretion.

Word as Bond (1/Day). When a Bondhunter finds someone who has broken their word, they want to punish this person, potentially killing them to make them into a new Bondhunter. When a Bondhunter reduces a target's HP to 0 and that target has broken a promise or told a serious lie, the Bondhunter wraps their body in Bonded Ropes. If they fail their death saving throws, they are reborn as a Bondhunter.

THE BONESINGER

By: Jen Vaughn

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Bonesinger is a bard so powerful in life that Death made them to continue playing after death, using their own body parts to string their violin.

BACKGROUND

Once a lively apprentice to a violin maker, Bonesinger learned the ins and outs of music and fine instrument craftsmanship. He started playing in the shop, testing out the quality of the strings before giving the instruments to their forever homes. Bonesinger's true talents began to shine and soon people were commissioning him to make songs for their special occasions and play concerts. He traveled the world on a bit of bowed wood and catgut string until one day, he played for the biggest patron of them all.

Dispater of the second level of the Nine Hells was so charmed by the violin maker's music that he made a deal with him. If Bonesinger worked for Dispater, he could play music forever and no one would ever forget his melodic melodies. The violin maker agreed, not realizing the costs. Dispater immediately took his life and used his body parts to form an arcane musical instrument. Dispater placed the violin, *Curtain's Call*, in the violin maker's still-warm, boned hands, snapping him back to life.

As part of their bargain, Bonesinger reaves souls for Dispater. Some young, some old, some poor, some rich. It's the old rich people or military people Bonesinger has a hard time getting access to. If persuaded, he can travel inside someone's bones - disappearing and reappearing once his violin is played.

Creatures Bonesinger has targeted often get a song stuck in their head for days. They feel an oncoming storm of some kind as each beat brings them closer to their death.



Bonesinger has no home or base of operations. His one other passion or luxury is wearing the finest silk pantaloons and well-made shoes. Should a creature wish to find him on purpose, they can roughly estimate when he will come back to town based on an order of one of the apparel items.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Bonesinger uses music as necromantic energy. If a song is ever stuck in your head, it means he can see

you and is walking closer... closer... closer still. He is contracted by Death to reave souls but being a living skeleton, it's hard to sneak up on heavily-guarded targets. He can travel inside someone else's bones once they play a note on Curtain's Call, his arcane violin. The bone conduction of music is his front door. The players could make a deal with him to help gain access to a target in exchange for not taking their souls or information.

Bonesinger can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** He knows a certain amount of info and shares it with you for the price of traveling inside you.
- **A Quest Giver.** Trouble knows trouble and he can tell you what problems he's seen in the local area. He's happy to have you save people so that he can target them later, souls reaved by clumsy hands are not worth as much as his artfully procured souls.
- **A Villain.** Bonesinger targets a character, who hears a song in their dreams, then waking life, maybe during battles. The music becomes louder the closer Bonesinger is, until it is a deafening roar. There is a way to delay the Bonesinger and it is to teach him a song he does not know.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

He is contracted by Dispater to reave souls for the rest of time. Bonesinger believes that if he can learn every song to ever have existed that maybe he can play himself back to a fleshy existence.

FLAWS

Bonesinger covets fine silk trousers or knickerbockers, they are one of the few things that makes him still feel alive. He has an ongoing agreement with local tailors and can be relatively found based on their next order. A fine pocket square, pashmina, or ascot can also distract him.

CURTAIN'S CALL

Wondrous item (violin), common

A shimmering purple glow pulses from the violin whenever a string is played or plucked. In the Bonesinger's unfleshed hands, it is capable of many terrible things. In a living creature's hands, it is a skilled bardic tool.

Death and Dispater are behind many musical numbers and enhanced this instrument to ensure others may meet their end sooner rather than later. As an action, you may give up to two creatures advantage on their next attack roll by playing a jaunty tune.

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

Bonesinger

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) |

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Skills Performance +8, Intimidation +5, Persuasion +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish, Abyssal

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

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

Regeneration. The Bonesinger regains 5 hit points at the start of each of its turns.

Undead Nature. The Bonesinger doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

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

Violin Curtain's Call. As an action, the Bonesinger plays a tune on its violin. Any creature within 60 feet of the Bonesinger that can hear must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be restrained for one minute.

BRYNHILDA KHOLAR

By: Justin Handlin of Crit Academy

Artist: Dean Spencer

Brynhilda is a powerful eldritch warrior whose defense is nigh impossible to overcome. Using magical barriers to defend against attack and turning enemy magical attacks into her own.

BACKGROUND

Brynhilda was once a beautiful noblewoman of House Kholar. She was quiet, reserved, calm, collected, and secretive. If it wasn't for her mastery of mixing magic and blade, she would have easily been overlooked by many. She would often tend to slink into the background and do whatever she could to keep from drawing too much attention to herself. Of course, this was difficult when sparring on the practice fields, as she nearly became a different person when engaged in battle. A thrill would rush through her during the fight and cause her blood to boil with excitement.

When Brynhilda was of age, her pre-arranged marriage to Hjalmar Kholar forced her to put her dreams of becoming an adventurer down forever. She instead became a housewife with two lovely children: her eldest daughter Ingrid, and son Oddir who was two years Ingrid's junior. During their youth they started to develop skills of their own, Ingrid learning the arts of the weave, and Oddir becoming a skillful swordsman.

As the children began to grow and Hjalmar was away more often on business, Brynhilda spent much of her time training her children in the arts of magic and swordsmanship. She considered time spent sparring and training her children to be some of the best moments of her life. Unfortunately, this was not to last.

Hjalmar slowly became more agitated, angry, and brooding when he would return from his business trips. Brynhilda never fully understood why, as her



husband preferred to not share their business dealings with her. He often said, "House business is not of import to the Lady of the house." This left her in the dark on a good many things. He slowly began to delve into drinking, which led to him becoming violent and angry, often injuring the house servants.

Upon one especially violent alcoholic rage, Brynhilda stepped in and pleaded for Hjalmar to stop his violence toward the servants. This infuriated him. Shortly after returning from a day out with her daughter to find one of the slaves beaten to death, she drew the line, threatening to report him to the local High Lord if he continued to do this, which would result in lashings and imprisonment.

All was quiet while Hjalmar was gone. Late one night when the moon was high, some intruders snuck into the family's manor while they slept. A disturbance awoke Brynhilda and she dashed from her bed, seeking out her children. She found them safe, sleeping in their beds. The sound of a struggle drew her to the kitchen area where she stumbled upon several intruders who had just slain one of the servants who happened by. She swiftly kicked her body into motion, almost on its own accord. A quick scuffle back and forth, but they were no

match for her. Fighting them off with a small kitchen knife, she was able to quickly slay one of them as the other intruder escaped.

The following morning, she strode to the rooms of the children to wake them, only to find them dead. No visible wounds to be seen. Something had taken the children in the night. Brynhilda was crushed. Tears rolling down her cheeks, confused as to what could have happened, she reached out to a temple priest and discovered that the children had been poisoned. Unsure why, she decided to devote herself to finding her children's murderer and the reason why they did such a horrible thing.

Her investigation led her to a terrifying truth. Her husband had run the house into so much debt, the only thing of value they had was their manor, and the children's stored inheritance from Brynhilda's family. She discovered that the death of the children was the result of a plot by her husband and some debtors to gain access to the children's stored wealth. Believing that if they were out of the picture, he would just claim their inheritance to solve their debt problems.

Brynhilda was furious. She quickly slew her husband and went on a search for the others responsible for her children's death. Unable to find the ones responsible, after many years of searching, she did the only thing a loving mother could do. She reached out to a higher power that would help buy her the time she needed. She made a deal with a powerful demon to extend her life so that she could get revenge on those who harmed her children. Unfortunately, the deal was twisted by the demon, binding her to her lands. As the years passed, she continued to age, until her flesh and organs all rotted and fell from her body, leaving only her skeletal form.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Brynhilda protects her children's tomb and their inheritance from any and all who would attempt to pilfer from it.

Brynhilda can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** During her investigation, she was able to gather plenty of information on different unscrupulous groups in the area, including what she has learned of the Zhentarim.
- **A Quest Giver.** She's seeking out anyone who can help bring those responsible for her children's murder to justice and break the seal that binds her to the Tomb of the Stolen (see below).
- **A Trader.** Brynhilda has gathered many items from slain grave robbers and adventurers alike. She is all too happy to barter with it in order to avoid a fight if possible.
- **A Villain.** If the characters venture into Brynhilda's lair seeking out treasure or an item contained within her children's inheritance, she attempts to slay them while crying out the evil of what they do, "Hasn't enough been taken from them?"

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Brynhilda continues to seek out vengeance against those who stole her children from her. She hopes that once this is done, she can be buried and left to rest in peace alongside them.

FLAWS

Brynhilda is a very lonely person, as she has been bound to the tomb for over a century. She is often only visited by those who seek to steal her treasure or destroy her. Because of this, when she happens upon those who seek not to fight and pilfer, but talk, she tends to ramble on. This makes her very susceptible to deceptive tactics, especially if one appeals to comradery and family.

Brynhilda Kholar

Medium undead, chaotic good

Armor Class 16 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) |

Saving Throws Int +6, Con +5

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Skills Athletics +6 Intimidation +3, Perception +6, Persuasion +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Brynhilda's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14). Brynhilda can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components

2/day each: absorb elements (XGtE), mirror image, misty step, shield

Legendary Resistance (1/day). If Brynhilda fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Brynhilda makes two attacks with any combination of her Mage Slayer or her Repelling Blast.

Mage Slayer (Longsword). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Repelling Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) force damage, and the target is pushed up to 10 feet away from Brynhilda in a straight line.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Brynhilda 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. Brynhilda regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Pushing Attack. Brynhilda attacks once with the Mage Slayer. On a hit, the creature must succeed on a **DC 15 Strength saving throw** or be pushed up to 15 feet away from Brynhilda.

Repelling Blast. Brynhilda makes one attack with Repelling Blast.

MAGE SLAYER

Weapon (longsword), rare, requires attunement

A near invisible, magical energy ripples across the entire length of this blade, much like the air above an open flame.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you attack with this weapon, you ignore any bonus to AC granted to the target by spells (such as *barkskin*, *mage armor*, *haste*, or *shield*) or similar effects.

TOMB OF THE STOLEN

By Justin Handlin of Crit Academy
Map: Dyson Logos

Tomb of the Stolen is a short lair adventure designed for five characters between 5-8th-level.

BACKGROUND

The Kholars' manor was designed with a basement crypt to store passing family members. This allowed them to pay respects as often as they wished. Unfortunately, the children were the first to be buried here by Brynhilda. After slaying her husband who had assassins sent in to claim their lives, she decided to burn his body, not allowing him to rest alongside them. After her transformation from the demon's twisted pact, the tomb of her children has been her prison ever since.

Over the years, many have entered the Tomb of the Stolen. Some seeking riches, others out to slay the undead creature that makes the tomb her home. Because of this, she has set up traps and allowed other creatures of nightmare to inhabit the area, so long as they don't attempt to desecrate her children's tomb or steal their inheritance.

PLOT HOOK

The story and lore surrounding the tragedy that befell the Kholar family a century ago is familiar to most of the locals in the area. Not only for the heinous act of the father, but of the lengths that the house mistress went to avenge her fallen children and protect their inheritance.

This leads many treasure hunters down into the tomb to find the Kholar inheritance. Additionally, it is known that many would-be adventurers have attempted to seek out the inheritance but never returned. This may lead some to believe that whatever valuables they were carrying may still be there.

Other adventurers may decide to seek out a much more righteous cause, seeking to slay the undead monstrosity that is said to reside there.

Alternatively, a character with the Criminal Contact background feature may have heard from a reliable and trustworthy source that the undead creature that inhabits the tomb has a valuable item for trade. Unfortunately, it's unclear what the item is.

DESCENDING INTO THE TOMB

As the party approaches the mine, read or summarize:

As you descend the rough stone stairs, the sound of a moving stream echoes off the finely carved cave walls. You also hear the sound of dozens of voices crying out in a shrill wail in the darkness.

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE CRYPT

Terrain. Stone, dirt, and loose gravel. Ceiling reaches 60 feet up.

Weather. The air in the tomb is cool.

Light. The tomb is dark, save for any light source the adventurers bring with them.

Smells and Sounds. An acrid, burning smell permeates the air (brimstone). The placid gurgling of the Lethe stream echoes through the mine.

AREA 1 – FEASTING CHAMBER

As the party enters Area 1, read or summarize:

The crypt opens at the bottom of the stairs revealing a high conical-shaped cave. It appears as if the tomb was carved out of an existing cavern. A set of stairs to the left rises high with several landings before stopping at a doorway just before reaching the top of the cavern-like tomb.

Just behind the cobblestone stairs is a small rising ramp. The main center of the chamber is filled with a small, shallow pool flowing in from a crevice under the stairway and out through a small pathway in the cavern wall to the north.

Just beyond the pool, the source of the shrill wailing becomes apparent: a large, deformed, amorphous mass of mouths and eyes. Several of its mouths lurch forward and attach to the ground as it pulls itself forward.

The center of this room has a small pool of water that appears to be running out from underneath a large set of stairs that lead to another level along the cave wall. The water contains two **sapper fish** (see sidebar). If killed, the sapper fish are replaced by two more from upstream after 10 minutes. The source of the shrill voices is a **gibbering moulder** (CR 2; MM, p 157).

SAPPER FISH

The sapper fish has the statistics of a **quipper** (MM p. 335) with the following additional trait:

Sap Strength. A creature hit by the sapper fish's bite has its stamina sapped and they begin to experience high levels of fatigue. The target must succeed a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw** or suffer one level of exhaustion.

AREA 2 – FALSE CRYPT

As the party enter Area 2, read or summarize:

A large broken urn sits atop a pedestal at the end of the room. A collection of small ornate metal boxes and jewels are collected around its base.

This room was created to entice would-be grave robbers into entering and unleashing a trap (see "Sleep of Ages" below) to punish them for their thievery. If the trap is activated, the **gibbering moulder** from Area 1 arrives and takes its time devouring them.

SLEEP OF AGES

Simple trap (Levels 5-- 10, dangerous threat)

When a sleep of ages trap activates, a pressure plate unleashes a spell that threatens to send intruders into a deep slumber.

Trigger. Stepping on a pressure plate triggers this trap.

Effect. When activated, this trap casts a *sleep* spell centered on the pressure plate, using a 5th-level spell slot.

Countermeasures. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the pressure plate. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check made within 5 feet of the pressure plate disables the trap, and a check with a total of 10 or lower triggers it. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 17) cast on the pressure plate destroys the trap.

TREASURE

The Urn itself is ornate with intricate carvings on it and is worth 200 gp. The area is littered with five diamonds worth 50 gp each, a pearl worth 500 gp, and a small collection of a various gems worth 175 gp altogether.

AREA 3 - SHRIEKERS

As the party enters Area 3, read or summarize:

A loud, ear-piercing screech shakes the cavern. At the end of the small incline, two human-sized purple mushrooms can be seen. The source of the screech appears to be emanating from the mushrooms. A large split in the wall forms a cave entrance with scattered remains of humanoid bones, various weapons, and armor.

This area has a **shrieker** (CR 0; MM, p 138) and a **gas spore** (CR ½; MM, p 138) that have been placed as an alarm system to warn Brynhilda of intruders. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check** reveals that the mushrooms are different. If the check succeeds by 5 or higher, they can identify them.

The cave entrance is the resting place of the **gibbering moulder** found in Area 1. The moulder tends to make its way back here while devouring its enemies, often leaving behind their basic equipment (see *PHB* ch. 5).

TREASURE

Populate the area with as much or as little basic equipment as you want. The area also contains two *potions of greater healing*.

AREA 4 - STAIRS

As the party enters Area 4, read or summarize:

A large switch-back style set of ascending stairs carved into the rocky cavern wall leads up to a small doorway about 40 feet up from the floor of the cavern.

The stairs are carved out of the cavern's rocky wall and have worn over the years. The lack of a handrail makes it a dangerous place. If battle breaks out, Brynhilda favors battle from its top, using it as a tool to funnel her enemies into one-on-one combat and knock them off when they get too close. She does her best to knock the players

down onto the **gas spore** in Area 3. At the first landing of the stairs, all creatures are visible to the **shrieker** in Area 3, which then uses its Shriek reaction.

If the characters begin to make their way to the top and overpower Brynhilda, she rushes into Area 6 and activates the *cube of force* (DMG p. 159) there. Specifically, she activates the cube's third face, which prevents living creatures from passing through the barrier while she attacks with her Repelling Blast from inside.

AREA 5 - BRYNHILDA'S QUARTERS

As the party enters Area 5, read or summarize:

A single straw bed sits up against the wall. A worn, tattered blanket with a family crest lies atop it. Alongside the bed is a damaged and dusty table with a single picture frame resting upon it.

This area where Brynhilda lives and rests while protecting her children and their inheritance. With a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check** a character can see that the picture on the table is of a beautiful young Brynhilda and her children, all three in a loving embrace with wide smiles upon their faces. Another door leads out of the room into Area 6.

The dusty table has a hidden compartment that can be found with a successful **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. The hidden compartment contains a writ of land ownership for a 1-square-mile area around the tomb.

AREA 6 - CRYPT

As the party enters Area 6, read or summarize:

This room appears to have significantly less dust and dirt when compared to the rest of the tomb cavern. In each far corner of the room rests a small stone sarcophagus, each decorated with intricate gold and silver filigree designs. Atop a small pedestal sits a metallic cube about an inch across. Each face has a distinct marking on it.

This room is the resting place of Brynhilda's children and their inheritance, both of which she protects from any threats until she can't fight anymore. The inheritance of the children is a *cube of force* (DMG p. 159) that can form invisible magical barriers.

A successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals the magic item as the *cube of force*, as well as the fact that each of its barriers' effects are limited to a duration of 1 minute. The cube's magic can also be suppressed for 10 minutes by a *dispel magic* spell paired with a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check**.

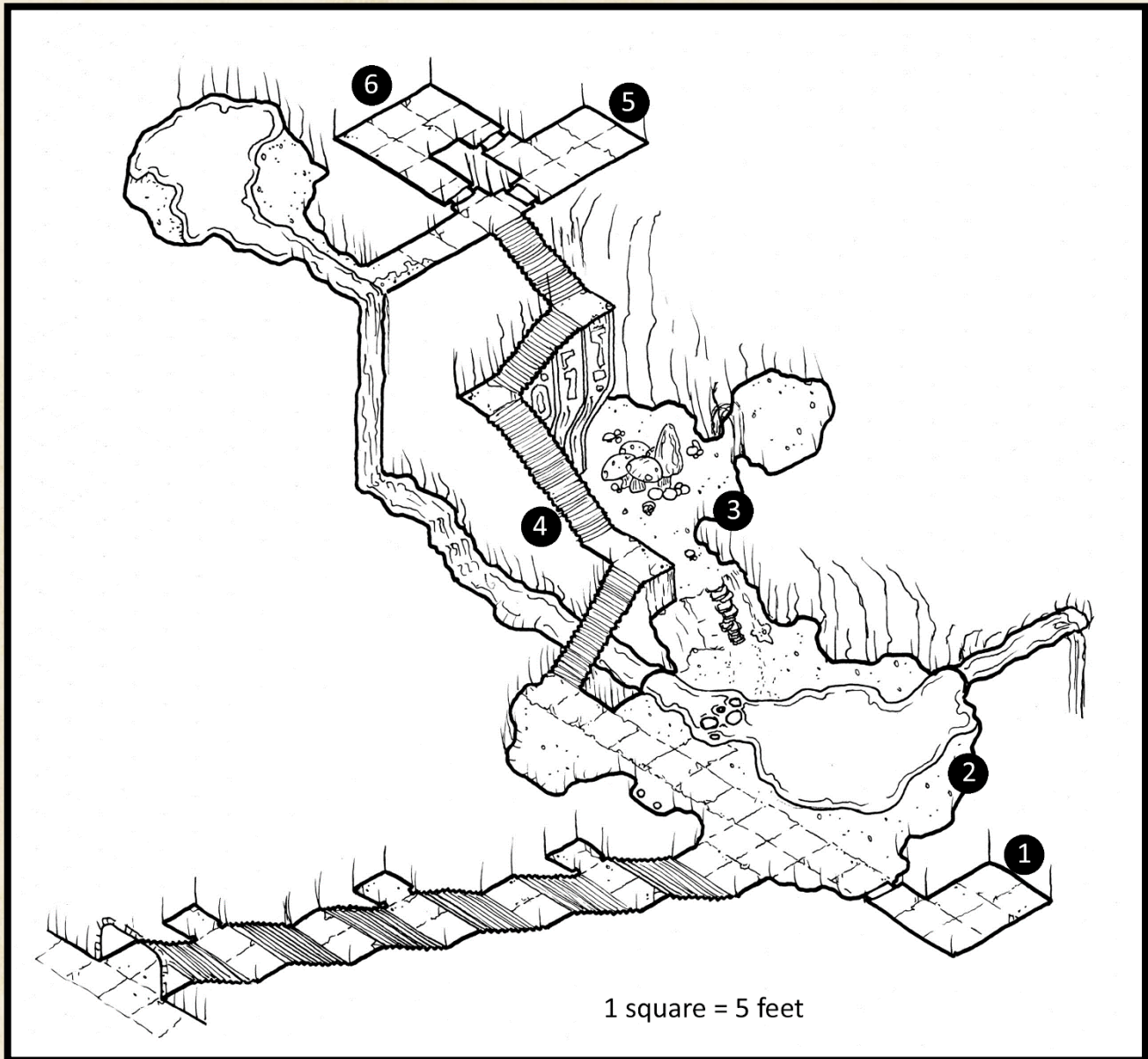
CONCLUSION

If the characters decide to defeat all the creatures and collect the rewards that lay within, they are also given the title "Night's Bane" from a local noble, as well as a 500 gp reward.

If the characters meet with Brynhilda and learn the truth of her fate and that of her children, they may choose to seek out the murderers, an investigation that can lead to members of the dark faction, the Zhentarim.

If the characters take a completely different approach and end up befriendng Brynhilda, she could make for an interesting recurring NPC in your campaign. If this happens, or they return with proof they have dealt with the Zhentarim, she offers them a writ of land ownership (see Area 5).

TOMB OF THE STOLEN



CINDLE “ROT MONSTER” MARELLO

By: Matthew Whitby

Artist: Gary Dupuis: Purple Duck Games

Once a proud cleric, tempted into receiving a powerful curse that rendered Cindle Marello to rot forever more. Determined to persevere no matter what.

BACKGROUND

Cindle Marello was a proud cleric of Ilmater, the god of suffering, martyrdom, and perseverance, renowned for his compassion and endurance. Endurance is a trait that Cindle has needed, having lived far from an easy life after losing her family to endless raids of goblins, gnolls, and other feral beasts.

Joining a chapel of Ilmater gave reason to her suffering; it was a part of life, and her endurance would be rewarded. Cindle thrived within her faith, becoming an exemplar pupil and a beacon of perseverance.

She was sent out to aid those in far lands, healing the wounded and freeing those who were oppressed. One fateful expedition had Cindle clashing with cultists of Zuggtmoy, the Lady of Rot and Decay. The resulting conflict left Cindle marked, a fungal infection that caused her body to distort and rot from her bones.

Nothing she could do could ease the pain, but as a follower of Ilmater she found a way to survive. However, when trying to return to her chapel, Cindle was shunned and exiled.

Feeling abandoned by her faith, and from all civilization, she became a recluse, rotting forevermore as she suffers, becoming the “rot monster” everyone called her.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Cindle Marello wants nothing more than to live a life free of her curse, but as every attempt has



been futile, she'll settle for a life of without being burdened.

Cindle “Rot Monster” Marello can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Hermit.** Years of eternal rotting forced Cindle to live out in the wilderness, in a hut of her own making, away from civilized life. People might just stumble across her home by accident.
- **A Prisoner.** Misunderstood and looking as she does, many are quick to call Cindle a monster and capture her. The adventurers might find Cindle contained within a cell.
- **A Wise Sage.** Rumors speak of a monster that is both incredibly wise and an expert of demonology. Cindle is that wise sage, trading knowledge for items that might aid her.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Ultimately, Cindle wishes to find some way in which to remove the “Blessing of Zuggtmoy,” to cease the endless rot by any means necessary.

She also feels abandoned by Ilmater (despite this being untrue) but still seeks answers from the deity she once worshipped.

FLAWS

A life of doing what she thought was right, and the one mistake that cost her everything, has left Cindle incredibly bitter. Having seen the powers of both Gods and of demons, she is convinced that both condemned her equally.

As a result, Cindle is far from good company. She is rude, irritable, and angry. She believes that even though her rot is on the outside, everyone has some form of rot in their soul. She’ll live up to her nickname of “Rot Monster,” just to keep people away.



CINDLE “ROT MONSTER” MARELLO

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 17 (+3) | 12 (+1) |

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +7

Skills Intimidation +9, Religion +4, Medicine +7

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Zuggtmoy’s Blessing. Cindle suffers 9 necrotic damage at the start of her turn. Shedding a lump of rotten skin in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of her. A creature that who touches the shed skin must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned and suffer 3 (1d6) necrotic damage at the start of its turn until cured.

Endless Endurance. Cindle regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. If she takes acid or fire damage this trait doesn’t function at the start of her next turn. If she starts her turn at 0 hit points, this trait does not function.

Spellcasting. Cindle is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mending, sacred flame, spare the dying*
1st level (4 slots): *divine favor, guiding bolt, healing word, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, magic weapon, prayer of healing, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *crusader’s mantle, dispel magic, revivify, spirit guardians, water walk*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, freedom of movement, guardian of faith, stoneskin*

5th level (1 slots): *flame strike, mass cure wounds, hold monster*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Cindle makes two melee attacks.

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Guided Strike (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Cindle grants a +10 bonus to an attack roll made by herself or another creature within 30 feet of her. Cindle can make this choice after the roll is made but before it hits or misses.

GLOVES OF ILMATER

Wonderous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A pair of white gloves with blood red cord tied around the wrists.

While wearing the gloves, you gain the following benefits:

- As an action, you can touch a creature and draw from a pool of 25 hit points to restore a number of hit points to that creature, up to the maximum amount remaining in the pool. As a result, you lose the number of hit points restored.
- Alternatively, you can expend 5 hit points from the pool to cure the target of one disease or neutralize one poison affecting it. You can cure multiple diseases and neutralize multiple poisons with a single use, expending hit points separately for each one. As a result, you gain the disease or poisoned cured this way.

The pool of hit points replenishes when you complete a long rest.

ENDLESS ENDURANCE

Wonderous item, rare (requires attunement)

A spiked chain neckless, painfully tight around the neck.

While wearing the neckless, you regain 10 hit points at the start of your turn. If you take acid or fire damage, this trait doesn’t function at the start of your next turn. If you start your turn at 0 hit points, this trait does not function.

DEADMOON RISE

By Oliver Clegg

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Map: Dyson Logos

Deadmoon Rise is a short lair adventure designed for five characters of 20th level.

BACKGROUND

One dark night in the distant past, a star fell from the sky and buried itself deep in the earth. The star contained a herald of an elder evil, Atropus, the World Born Dead. The shard was a scout – an atropal – sent to slumber at the core of the world and awaken when the earth was ripe for harvesting. As the centuries passed, civilizations noted the strange happenings in the area, and built a standing circle over it to ward off fell magic. Curious souls delved deep in search of starmetal, but failed to find the source of the magic, eventually retiring and falling to dust, as all mortals eventually must.

Now, long since the stone circle has been lost to memory, the atropal has awakened. And it sings into the night for its master to join it.

PLOT HOOK

The stone circle at *Deadmoon Rise* has begun to sing. Early investigations have discovered that approaching the circle is lethal to the unprepared, and calls for help have been sent to anyone with the knowledge or experience to assist.

SONG OF THE ATROPAL

Creatures that come within 1 mile of *Deadmoon Rise* can hear the keening song of the Atropal. Creatures that come within 100 feet of *Deadmoon Rise* take 1 necrotic damage at the start of their turn. Teleportation magic or abilities targeting (or used within) *Deadmoon Rise* always suffer a mishap as if they had cast a *teleport* spell and rolled a ‘Mishap’ on the associated table. Spell and abilities that restore hit points do not function whilst inside *Deadmoon Rise*. Creatures



cannot rest inside *Deadmoon Rise*. Divine Intervention and Channel Divinity abilities do not function inside *Deadmoon Rise* – the influence of the World Born Dead is sufficient even at this early stage to sever the link between deities and their servants. Casters who are affected by this caveat are aware of it as soon as they approach the lair.

APPROACHING DEADMOON RISE

As the party approaches the lair, read the following:

Through the howling on the wind, you see the stone circle that marks the entrance to Deadmoon Rise. The earth here is blackened and lifeless – a powerful sense of evil beckons you closer. Between the stones, a steep slope leads downwards into the dark.

The area around the stones is littered with the skeletons of villagers and travelers who came to investigate the noise and disintegrated before they got through the stones (see A Seal Broken and Twisted). The spiral stair leading to Area 1 is unlit, with no handholds.

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. Carved stone warped in fractal spiral patterns

Light. It is pitch black inside the mine.

Smells and Sounds. An acrid, burning smell permeates the air (brimstone). The placid gurgling of the Lethe stream echoes through the mine.

A SEAL BROKEN AND TWISTED

The stone circle at Deadmoon Rise was once a powerful protection, but now works to the ends of the atropal. The entrance to the caves is buried in the earth, and the ring of stone is impassable as if the gaps between the stones were filled with a *wall of force*. Destroying any of the stones (AC 15, 25 hit points) ends this effect, but causes each stone still standing to unleash a *psychic scream* spell in a 15-foot radius centered on itself.

AREA 1 – SANDS OF MORTALITY

As the party enter Area 1, read or summarize:

The singing is louder now, and rings in your ears like mortality itself come to claim you. The sands of time slip away with the song, carrying you ever closer to death.

Creatures in Areas 1 onwards age one year for every five minutes spent inside Darkmoon Rise.

Creatures being aged in this way can feel the life potential draining from them.

CLINGING GRASP OF TIME

Characters that move into this room find themselves assailed with illusory memories of their lives and people they love, all of whom beg them to turn back before they perish. The illusory memories cannot leave Area 1, but they appeal to their charges each time characters return here.

THROUGH THE HOURGLASS

The floor of this area is *quicksand* (DMG, p110) which stretches endlessly down below the floor of Deadmoon Rise. Creatures in the quicksand age at a rate of 1 year each round.

AREA 2 – THE MOONLURE MURALS

As the party enter Area 2, read or summarize:

The walls of this long room are riddled with spirals eating into themselves, criss-crossing into other worlds, vistas of darkness and the sound of crunching, wasting, biting euphoria. Can you hear it? The song calls him across time and space. He comes.

SIX MURALS FOR A REQUIEM

The walls of this room twist and groan to the song of the Atropal. The stone here is flexible obsidian and can be manipulated as if it were soft earth as long as it remains within 1 mile of the atropal. Every round, new and disturbing images appear graven into the walls, twisting and devouring each other. They are nonsense, but hypnotic. Each alcove in this room contains a Moonlure Mural trap.

MOONLURE MURAL TRAP

Simple trap (Levels 16-20, deadly threat)

This trap is a dangerous side effect of the atropal's magic.

Trigger. A living creature enters the room. After approximately 6 seconds pass, the trap triggers.

Effect. The room is suddenly affected by a *sympathy* spell (DC27) which attracts targets towards the mural, where they remain gawking indefinitely. The *sympathy* effect cannot be dispelled.

THE SMILE OF A DEAD GOD

The characters are not the only creatures that have answered the call of the Atropal. Hidden in the shadows of the room, a **nightwalker** (CR 20; MToF, p 216) newly arrived from the negative energy plane haunts the edges of the mural. It attacks characters that enter the room after 1 round has passed. It attacks silently, and a smile is etched into the shadows of its face.

AREA 3 – MAZE OF DARK MIRRORS

As the party enter Area 3, read or summarize:

The dark stone corridors wend and wind, treading back in on themselves like the tapestry of existence snarled. Your reflection glimmers on the black stone, and echoes of your life drift by you, treading the same paths to nothing over and over until they fall to dust.

THE MIRROR MAZE

This close to the atropal, the world is fractured and broken. A creature moving through this area must spend 4 feet of movement for every 1 it moves. For every 5 feet a creature moves in this area, they leave a phantasmal echo of themselves behind, which copies their movements exactly before leaving its own copy behind and so on ad infinitum. Every time a creature attempts to move through the mirror maze, they must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or fall under the influence of a *confusion* spell until the end of their next turn.

REFLECTIONS ON DEATH

The atropal calls through time and space to the outer reaches of reality, where an elder evil lurks. For a brief moment, the reflective stone of the mirror maze flickers, revealing the horror that is Atropus, the World Born Dead, as it turns its face towards creation.

THE GRINNING FACE OF DEATH

Complex trap (Levels 15-20, deadly threat)

The merest touch of Atropos' presence is anathema to the living. Everywhere, the mirrored stone reflects the face of death, far away amongst the stars.

Trigger. A living creature enters the winding stone maze. The trap triggers immediately throughout the entire cave network.

Initiative. The Grinning Face of Death acts on Initiative counts 25, 15, 5 and 0.

Active Elements. The turning face of Atropus brings the negative energy plane coterminous with the material plane over four stages.

New Moon (Initiative 25). The entirety of Deadmoon Rise falls under the effects of a Symbol (Death) spell (DC20). Living creatures gain an immediate sense that they are about to die.

Waxing Crescent (Initiative 15). Creatures that can see any of the mirrored stone must succeed on a DC20 Charisma saving throw or be Stunned until the end of their next turn.

Waxing Gibbous (Initiative 5). The entirety of Deadmoon Rise is blanketed by magical darkness.

Full Moon. (Initiative 0). The negative energy plane becomes coterminous for a brief moment. Any creature on the material plane and inside Deadmoon Rise when this occurs is slain. Creatures immune to necrotic damage are unaffected.

Constant Elements. The New Moon damages creatures each round, and the darkness of the Waxing Gibbous renews itself.

New Moon. Creatures take 1 necrotic damage at the start of their turn.

Waxing Gibbous. The darkness renews itself at the start of each character's turn and extinguishes light sources in the area.

Countermeasures. Some aspects of the trap can be ameliorated by particular measures.

The Power of Dirt. Creatures can dirty the rocks or otherwise obscure the sight of Atropos. If a creature manages to completely block all of the mirrored rock in sight of them, they are unaffected by the trap until they come once more into sight of an active section of rock. Shattering the rock has no effect on the trap.

Antimagic. A creature inside an antimagic field is takes half-damage from New Moon.

Wish. A successful casting of the *wish* spell can end this trap and de-activate the mirrored coating of the walls.

SCREAMING FACES FROM BEYOND THE WALL

The Mirror Maze is a host to all those dark secrets that wander the space between stars. Each time a character moves 5 feet through the Mirror Maze, a **wraith** (CR 5; MM, p 302) appears somewhere in Darkmoon Rise and begins hunting down life forms.

AREA 4 – THE DESCENT

As the party enter Area 4, read or summarize:

The madness of the hall of black mirrors ends as abruptly as it began. A staircase leads down into the dark. Each step bears an eternity of sorrow, and the song that brought you here echoes ever louder from down below.

STAIRCASE TO OBLIVION

A creature that sets foot on the staircase immediately becomes the target of a *maze* spell, in which they are shifted to a bizarre and nonsensical version of Darkmoon Rise empty of their allies. This mirror dimension is identical at face value but bears several alarming aesthetic traits.

1. The character's allies are absent, even when trapped in their own versions of the *maze* spell within Darkmoon Rise. Each instance of the maze is separate from the others.
2. The Song of the Atropal can still be heard inside the *maze*, with all the associated effects.
3. The staircase extends infinitely in either direction, stretching to darkness.
4. A character that drops to 0 hit points inside one of the maze dimensions is consumed by the negative energy plane and destroyed.

STAIRCEPTION

Staircase to Oblivion triggers whenever a character sets foot on a new stair, and each *maze* has the ability to manifest a demiplane nested in the one below, and so on. This can lead to an endlessly nested series of demiplanes, each 'level' leading to a lower one and so on. The possibility of being

forever trapped in the endless void of the Staircase to Oblivion until the Song of the Atropal wears them away to dust is a bleak but notable contingency you should be prepared for.

THE WITCH OF THE WAYS

A **green hag** (CR3; MM, p 177) called Nanny Nightslugger lives on the Staircase to Oblivion. Precisely how she does this without falling to pieces is unclear to any but her and her Weird Magic, but she's always looking for an opportunity to bargain.

Nanny's Bargain. The hag is quite comfortable in her position, but resents the intrusion of adventurers into the plane she calls home. She pretends to accept magical items in exchange for using her magic to help the party escape. She then cackles and flees into the stair network with her prizes without helping one bit, tempting characters to chase her.

AREA 5 – VOID OF SILENT SCREAMING

As the party enter Area 5, read or summarize:

This large chamber is draped in shadow, and dominated by a sallow, gigantic corpse that festers with dark magic and the promise of eternal quiet. It shrieks endlessly with a mouth that lolls open, tongue flapping around wicked teeth that each chitter secret lies from your childhood. Each word is poison, and a promise, and a call to something greater.

THE ATROPAL

The atropal known as the **Harbinger of Atropus** is singing its silent, hysterical, noisy paean across the cosmos from this chamber. It attacks anyone who enters the room with ill-disguised glee, pleased to offer the destruction of little mortal fleshbags to the World Born Dead as a sacrifice.

THE FACE OF EVIL

The Song of the Atropal is particularly pernicious here. Characters that can hear the music at the start of their turn take 5 necrotic damage at the start of their turn, in addition to any damage incurred from proximity to the atropal itself.

FIGHTING THE ATROPAL

The adventurers are likely weakened by the time they arrive in the atropal's chamber. It spares no effort in finishing them off, focusing first on characters with the most vitality remaining to drain. It babbles obscene nonsense the entire time, and attempts to reason with it meet with nothing but insane laughter and continued crooning.

SLAYING THE HARBINGER

As the party defeat the atropal, read or summarize:

The atropal shudders and collapses in on itself like a dying star. It jerks about like a marionette caught in a storm, and writhes about in agony, shrinking to a tiny dot of black energy that pulses quietly for a small moment. Then it pulses again.

The death of the atropal results in a small tear between the material plane and the negative energy plane, triggering a Negative Energy Breach.

CONCLUSION

The breach continues to expand until it is stopped, and if the adventurers take the death of the atropal as a sign to utilise their new ability to teleport away, they may find that the problem quickly becomes too large to handle. The World Born Dead senses the death of its seneschal, and turns its malevolent gaze towards

the realm on which it was destroyed. Perhaps the atropal sang for long enough that the World Born Dead was able locate it. Perhaps the World Born Dead is out there, searching. Either way, the events at Deadmoon Rise are unlikely to leave the world unaffected.

NEGATIVE ENERGY BREACH

Complex trap (Levels 15-20, deadly threat)

The breach to the negative energy plane is incredibly dangerous. A single touch can obliterate the living and consume their remains entirely.

Trigger. The atropal is slain.

Initiative. The Negative Energy breach acts on Initiative counts 25 and 5.

Active Elements. The breach advances in size.

Expand (Initiative 25). The breach increases in size by 5 feet in all directions.

Inorexable Pull (Initiative 5). Creatures within 100 feet of the breach must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be pulled 5 feet towards the breach and knocked prone.

Constant Elements. The breach is death to any who come into contact with it, and is difficult to escape from.

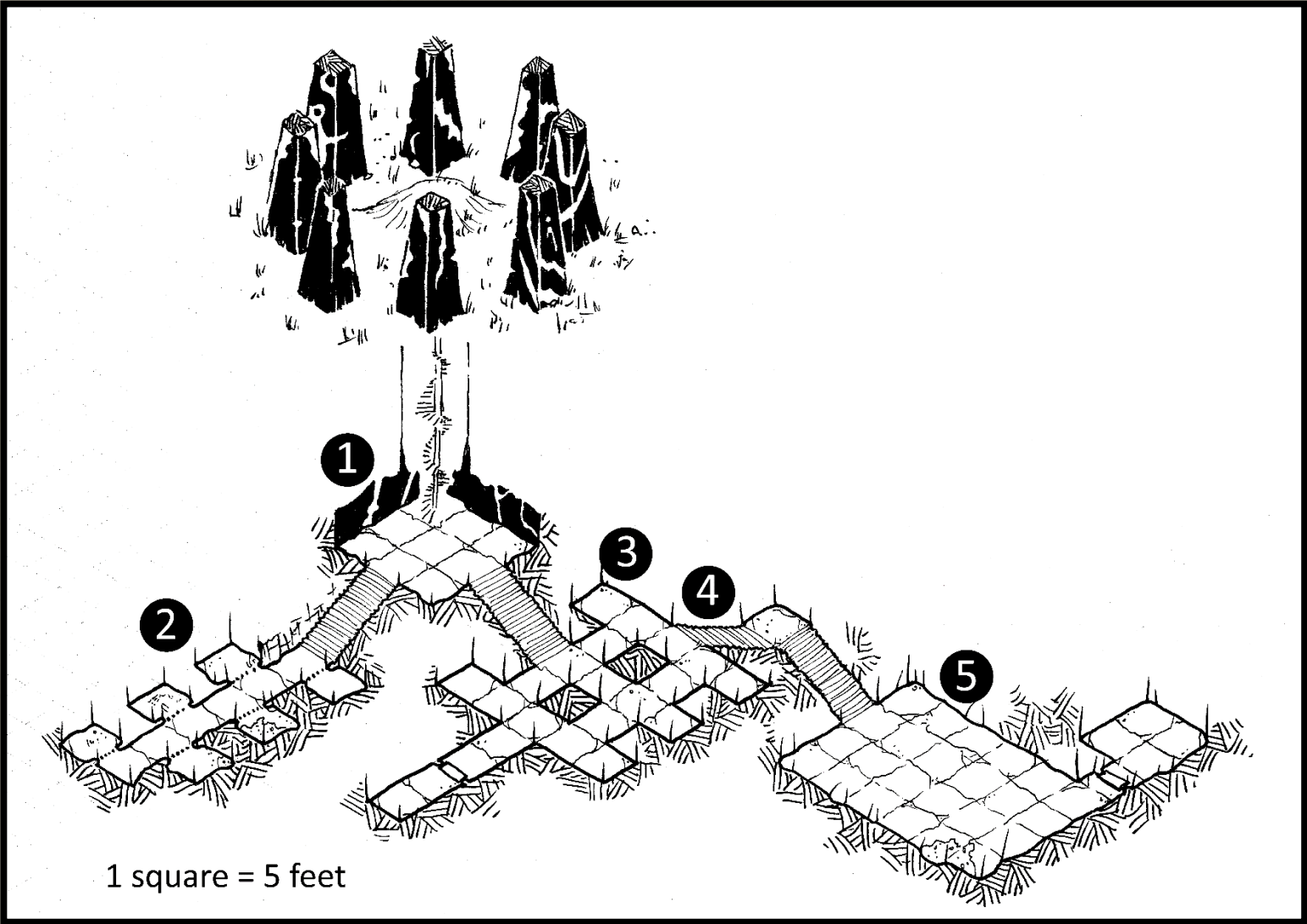
Expand. A creature that comes into contact with the breach is eradicated from existence.

Inorexable Pull. Deadmoon Rise is difficult terrain for all creatures.

Countermeasures. Some aspects of the trap can be ameliorated by particular measures.

Healing the Breach. A *wish* spell has a 50% chance of heal the breach instantaneously. Otherwise the breach can be closed with three successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) checks. Each check requires an action. A creature must be within 10 feet of the breach to attempt such an action and only one creature can work on this task at once. Once a creature attempts a check for this purpose, no other character can do so until the end of that creature's next turn.

DEADMOON RISE



THE DOCTOR

By: Celeste Conowitch

Artist: Wizards of the Coast

The Doctor is a being from an entirely different world. They landed here seeking a cure to save a dying race. But time and self-experimentation have diverted the Doctor from their noble purpose.

BACKGROUND

The Doctor hails from a world far beyond the stars of the material realm. They began as one of an entire race like themselves, a people that prized diplomacy, exploration, and most of all: scientific progress.

The people beyond the stars were living and thriving for centuries, exploring the corners of the material plane until a ship returned to port one day. The crew had all perished, save for one noble pilot who charted the vessel home to warn the planet of a terrible being that lurked in the dark reaches of space. With a dying breath, the pilot spoke of an unstoppable sickness that had slain the crew.

Rapidly, the people of that land began to grow sick and die. There was nothing in all their medical science that could halt the progress of this arcane plague. So, the leaders of the world formed a crew of their best and brightest. They tasked this crew to leave their world and find a cure to save their dying people.

The Doctor was appointed lead surgeon and xenobiologist. Within days of launch, crew members began to show symptoms of the disease. The Doctor discovered that the only way to stave off the illness was to replace the failing tissues and organs of the body with other healthy specimens. But by the time the Doctor reached this breakthrough, the rest of the crew was on death's door.



With a vital mission to protect, the Doctor put a merciful end to the rest of the crew, grafting the healthy parts into themselves piece by piece.

Unable to fly the ship alone, the vessel, and the Doctor with it, crashed to the nearest planet. Stranded on an unfamiliar world, and with no more materials to stave off the disease, the Doctor began to improvise.

The Doctor has been luring and dissecting creatures of this land for so long they have forgotten their original purpose and name. Their mad science, and the organs of their victims, continues to keep the Doctor animate, but even this undead amalgamation is wracked by the effects of the incurable disease. The Doctor

remains tethered to the crashed vessel and its machines until it can find a specimen with organs resistant to its alien disease.

CURRENT MOTIVES

The Doctor is currently trying to examine, dissect, and integrate as many species from the material plane as they can access. They fill their sleepless hours developing new ways to attract victims, new methods to preserve them, and puzzling over a cure for their own condition.

The Doctor can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Healer.** The Doctor has accumulated many lifetimes worth of medical and scientific knowledge. While they do not know the cure to help themselves, they either know or can discover the cure for any bodily illness.
- **A Quest Giver.** The Doctor is tethered to their crashed vessel and may seek the aid of adventurers to bring them new specimens to experiment upon. In this scenario, the Doctor has already dissected all the races that match the party's composition and has no scientific motivation to harm them.
- **A Villain.** The Doctor needs new specimens and the party are lured to the sunken vessel. The Doctor uses mystery and intrigue to trap the party on the sunken vessel, try to incapacitate them, and then dissect them for parts for their own preservation.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

The Doctor seeks a way to cure the disease that inevitably causes their body to deteriorate. They are committed to finding the cure through pure science and keep themselves alive by whatever means necessary until this goal is achieved.

FLAWS

The Doctor admires pure scientific reason above all other things. This worship of logic causes them to justify a great deal of pain, suffering, and questionable moral practices. Regardless of the harm they inflict, the Doctor faithfully believes that they are working for the greater good of societal progress.

SOLUTION PROPULSION MECHANISM

Wondrous Item, legendary (requires attunement by a character with a minimum INT score of 18)

The Solution Propulsion Mechanism is a complicated series of tubes and pistons welded together to create a high-speed launch apparatus. A rotating chamber of syringes, each filled with a different deadly concoction fuels this bizarre weapon.

It is a weapon of the Doctor's own design, allowing them to fire syringes filled with deadly solutions at their prey. For mechanical purposes, these solutions function as spells being cast.

The Solution Propulsion Mechanism can be wielded as a magical crossbow that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. On a hit, the target suffers 1d6 points of piercing damage and one of the solution effects chosen by you.

The Mechanism has 20 charges for the following properties. The Mechanism regains a charge for every hour spent brewing new solution with Alchemist's Supplies.

Solutions. On a successful hit with the Mechanism, you can expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus:

bane (1 charge)
cause fear (1 charge)
contagion (5 charges)
disintegrate (10 charges)
hold monster (6 charges)
inflict wounds (3rd-level version, 4 charges)
phantasmal killer (5 charges)
ray of enfeeblement (2 charges)

THE DOCTOR

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 71 (3d8 + 13)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (+0) | 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 20 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 13 (+1) |

Skills Intimidation +5, Medicine +8, Persuasion +5

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 8 (2,900 XP)

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

Undead Nature. The Doctor doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Solution Propulsion Mechanism. This weapon of The Doctor's own invention allows them to fire syringes loaded with different solutions. For the purposes of combat, treat the use of these solutions as spellcasting.

When using the Mechanism, The Doctor is considered a 12th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +8 to hit with spell attacks).

ACTIONS

Solution Propulsion Mechanism. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a living creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw of 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.



CRASH SITE

By Celeste Conowitch

Map: Jean Lorber

Crash Site is a short lair adventure designed for five characters of 6th to 8th level. Scaling instructions are included to run the adventure for characters from 5th to 9th level

BACKGROUND

Decades ago, a ship from beyond the stars crashed to earth. The crew of this vessel perished, ravaged by a fatal disease for which there was no discoverable cure. Only one survivor remained, the ship's Doctor, who swore to keep themselves alive by whatever means necessary until they could discover the cure.

The Doctor has perpetuated their survival by grafting the organs and parts of other species into their own flesh, slipping quietly into undeath. The Doctor, in their single-minded pursuit of the cure, has forgotten their name and original purpose but knows that they must draw fresh specimens to their ship, in hopes of discovering a being resilient to the disease.

PLOT HOOK

Avery Chestnut, the leader of a roaming band of bards arrives in town seeking aid from a group of capable adventurers. Two of their number disappeared from camp without a trace two moons ago. Eerie colored lights and sounds have been observed coming from the swamp near the bardic camp, and Avery fears some magical fiend has captured her harpist Luanne and her drum player Rosco.

If the adventurers travel into the swamp and discover the fates of her missing performers, she offers a substantial reward. (The exact reward is left to the DM's discretion, but the troupe has about 500 gp to offer from their coffers.)

TRAVERSING THE SWAMP

The swamp next to the bardic camp is large, full of gnarled brambles, twisted trees, and poisonous water. Navigating the swamp during the day requires a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)** check. Attempting to locate the missing bards at night is much easier, the flashing lights that emit from the crashed ship reduce this check to a **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)**. Failed checks result in 6 hours of searching without locating the crash site.

Aside from the unpleasant terrain, the swamp is quite safe. The more intelligent predators have long since fled the area, fearing The Doctor will abduct and dissect them.

APPROACHING THE CRASH SITE

As the party approaches the crash site, read or summarize:

The flash of light on metal catches your eye as your party steps through the trees. A giant disk lays half submerged in the water, stuck up at an odd angle. The disk's surface is covered in bizarre symbols and flashing orbs. A glass dome crowns the center of the disk, but its contents are completely obscured by algae and swamp muck.

This is the crash site of a ship from beyond the stars. The entrance is submerged in the murky swamp water. A character who looks under the water easily spots the entry doors, which are illuminated in blinking red lights.

The metal of the ship is slick with slime, any attempts to climb on its surface require a successful **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** check. A failed check causes the climber to slip into the murky swamp water, attracting the ire of a **swarm of quippers** (CR 1; MM, p 338).

If a character successfully climbs the ship, and wipes away the grime, they can peer through the glass into the command center (area 2).

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. The walls and floor of the ship's interior are made of metal that resembles steel.

Weather. The insulated nature of the hull keeps the ship's atmosphere dry and cool.

Light. Unless otherwise noted, the ship is lit by dull multicolored panels, providing dim light.

Smells and Sounds. The smell of rot and swamp algae fills the ship. The whole place is permeated by a low hum.

AREA 1: DECONTAMINATION CHAMBER

As the party enter Area 1, read or summarize:

You emerge from the pool of water into a cramped chamber set at an angle. Across from you are a set of double doors. Suddenly, you are blasted with a puff of air and the smell of rot fills the tiny room.

This room is the ship's decontamination bay. Once, the panels sprayed a cleaning agent. They have since failed to function, and now spray fetid swamp water.

AREA 2: COMMAND CENTER

As the party enter Area 2, read or summarize:

This circular room is filled with scattered chairs and more panels covered in alien sigils and flashing lights. There is a circular platform in the center of the chamber. The ceiling is the slime covered glass dome you observed from outside.

This room served as the ship's control room and engineering center. Ship functions have fallen into complete disrepair and no amount of button pushing allows the ship to move.

In the center of this room is a round platform with rails and a red control button. There are no other doors in this room.

TREASURE

Scattered about this room are a collection of crystals that resemble quartz. The total value of these crystals is 90 gp.

AREA 3: LIFT APPARATUS

As the party enter Area 3, read or summarize:

This round platform is lined with guard rails and a small safety gate. It has a control panel with a single red flashing button.

This platform serves as the way to travel between floors of the ship. The mechanism can carry the party to the 1st Basement level floor then it malfunctions, turning the lift into a trap.

'LIFT ON THE FRITZ' TRAP

Simple trap (Levels 11-16, moderate threat)

This trap activates whenever the unmaintained machinery of the lift is activated.

Trigger. The lift is used to travel 15 ft. between one floor of the ship to the next.

Effect. A creature standing on the lift platform must make a **DC 14 Dexterity saving throw** to exit the platform in time or take 12 (4d6) lightning damage and be **stunned**. A stunned creature can attempt the same save at the end of each round to end the condition.

The platform continues this damage each round until all the characters weight has been removed from it.

AREA 4: GALLEY

As the party enter Area 4, read or summarize:

The stench of rot is overwhelming in this room. Long banquet tables are arranged in the center. A tiled counter fills the back wall; it is covered in neat stacks of plates, and contains many cabinets.

This room served as the crew's galley. The cabinets are crammed full of molded provisions which are the source of the stench. A **black pudding** (CR 4; MM, p 241) is growing in one of the cabinets and, if disturbed, attacks the party.

Two sliding doors lead out of this room. One door is impossible to open, something heavy having blocked the other side, and a pool of water is slowly leaking into the galley. The other sliding door mechanism has failed, but a character can pry it open with a successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check.

TREASURE

In the same cabinet as the black pudding is a tin containing seven *beads of nourishment*.

AREA 5: SLEEPING QUARTERS

As the party enter Area 5, read or summarize:

Neat rows of bunk beds and footlockers fill this room. This room could sleep twelve. A large cartoon poster adorned with a red planet and unreadable glyphs hangs on one wall. All the beds have been made.

These are the sleeping quarters that were used by the crew. **The Doctor** has maintained the room and organized the crew's personal effects into the footlockers.

The wall opposite the entry holds another door that must be forced open with a successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check. The sound of flowing water can be heard from this side of the door.

TREASURE

In the foot lockers, amidst the clothing and paper effects that have begun to rot, there are a collection of decorative pins made from various precious metals. This pin collection is worth a total of 150 gp.

AREA 6: HYDROPONICS BAY

As the party enter Area 6, read or summarize:

A blast of humid air hits your face as the door opens. Every inch of this room is covered in thick green vines. In the very center hangs a metal apparatus, from which a constant stream of water pours, falling onto a heap of plant material.

This room used to be the Hydroponics Bay, where the crew grew and cultivated their food. It has now become the lair of a **shambling mound** (CR 5; MM, p 270).

On the wall opposite to the entryway is a set of doors completely blocked by vines (the same door observed in area 4). The hatch that leads to the second basement level of the ship is located underneath the shambling mound's center mass.

If the mound is defeated, the vines filling the room begin to wither, revealing the hatch.

FEATURES OF THE ROOM

The floor of this room is covered by a layer of filmy water. This water conceals the twisted mess of vines on the floor, and the whole chamber is difficult terrain.

TREASURE

The apparatus hanging in the room's center is a *decanter of endless water*.

SCALING THE BATTLE

APL 6-7: Add two **vine blights** (CR 1/2; MM, p 32) to the fight.

APL 8: Add three vine blights to the fight.

AREA 7: LABORATORY

When the party enters the passageway outside of Area 7, read or summarize:

This room is filled with strange smells and sounds. Rainbow liquids bubble over burning flames, glassware sits upon long metal tables, and a floor to ceiling storage vessel dominates one corner of the room.

This laboratory belongs to The Doctor. This is where they brew their weaponized solutions and search for a cure to their affliction.

There is only one set of double doors leading out of this room. The Doctor has preserved the door's mechanism and it opens normally.

The large storage container is where the Doctor keeps their samples.

If the party opens the storage doors read or summarize:

Curls of cold mist fall over you as you open the heavy metal doors. Glass jars filled with different humanoid body parts crowd the shelves, all of them are meticulously labeled with the alien symbols you have seen throughout the ship.

TREASURE

A test tube rack on one of the counters holds 3 *potions of greater healing* and 1 *potion of growth*.

AREA 8: SURGERY

When the party enters the passageway outside of Area 7, read or summarize:

White light sears your vision as you pass into this room. Shockingly bright overhead lamps illuminate two painfully polished steel slabs upon which lay two humanoid bodies of differing sizes. A figure with rubbery grey skin, dressed in a pristine white coat, removes their hands from the smaller body's splayed rib cage and looks at you inquisitively.

This is the Doctor's surgery, where they perform dissections and self-repairs.

The Doctor currently has all the body parts they need and is not interested in fighting unless the party is hostile towards them. They would prefer to be left alone to continue their research.

The two bodies on the table are the missing halfling harpist **Luanne** and the furbolg drummer **Rosco**. They were abducted by the Doctor because of their interesting racial features.

If the party initiates combat with the Doctor, the two corpses rise as **zombies** (CR 1/4; MM, p 316) to defend the Doctor.

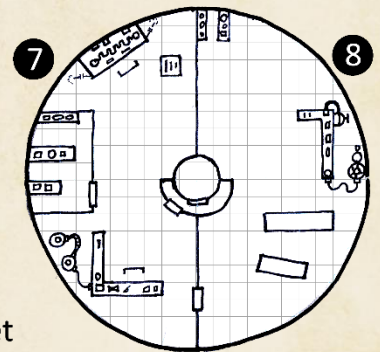
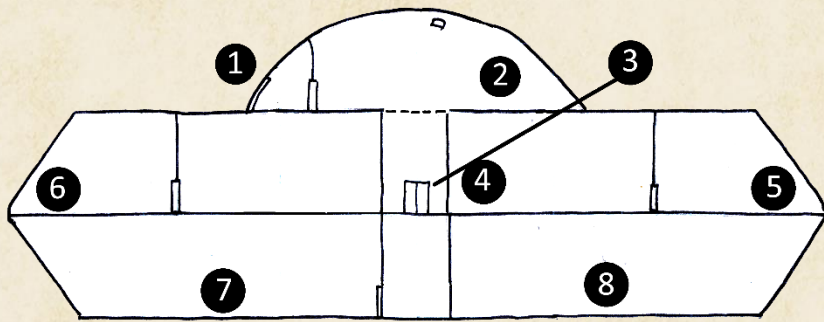
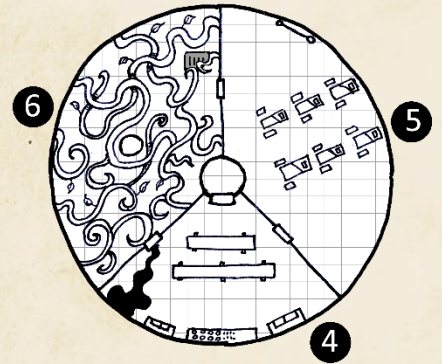
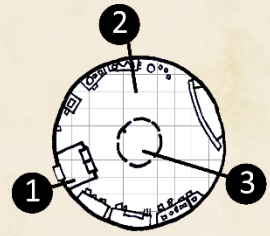
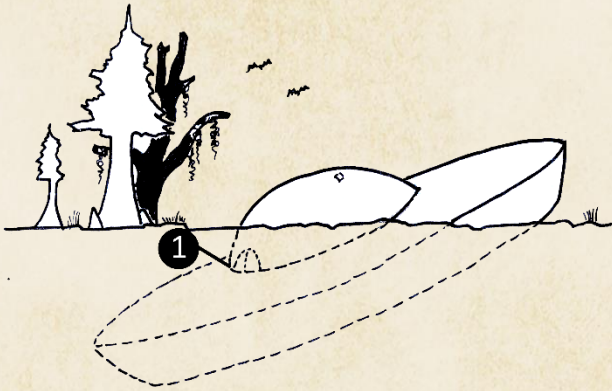
TREASURE

If the Doctor is slain once and for all, the party may take their *solution propulsion mechanism*, there is also a magical scalpel that functions as a *dagger +1*. Lastly, there are also the components to assemble a full set of *alchemist's supplies*.

CONCLUSION

Avery is horrified to learn of the fate of her performers but is grateful to the party and pays them as promised.

In short order, arcane specialists arrive to examine the ship and its disturbing implications.



1 square = 5 feet

DOXIUS ORBATER

By: R P Davis

Artist: Purple Duck Games: Gary Dupuis

Doxius Orbater is a thoroughly mad artificer who transformed himself into a pseudo-lich so he could explore the multiverse and continue his alchemical experiments. Now he un-lives in his specially-designed laboratory which spins through the skies—or the Astral Plane—until it lands somewhere the characters care about and creatures created from junk start spilling out and killing people...

BACKGROUND

It has been more than a thousand years since Doxius drew breath. It no longer remembers when it wore flesh, considering it a momentary weakness.

Doxius began studying ways to extend life using magic early. It spent the largest portion of its mortal life integrating alchemy and necromancy, twisting each to enhance the other. Power came naturally, especially when breakthroughs began to happen in the laboratory; other mortals flocked to graft their flesh to mechanical constructs powered by alchemical reactions.

A century passed. Doxius's clients amassed more and more money and power, thanks to their longevity, and began to savagely oppress the less fortunate. Doxius couldn't care less, spending more and more time in the laboratory, perfecting longevity techniques.

In time, the revolution came.

Doxius was able to escape the slaughter by animating its laboratory and taking flight to another continent. The alchemist's hybrid clients were not so well-prepared—or fortunate. The reek of their burning stained the skies for weeks.



Hidden atop a lonely mountain far from its old haunts, Doxius put the finishing touches on his immortality technique. What remained of Doxius's organic body was submerged in an alchemical soup, itself contained in a crystal jar animated by an adamantine construct apparatus capable of casting spells and performing the most delicate experiments, as well as impressive combat power.

Now fully immortal, Doxius caused its servants to carve a new laboratory out of the strange metallic ore on which the old laboratory landed. Once it was free from the mountainside, Doxius saw the new laboratory's shape and was pleased, for it was in the shape of a human skull. Cackling, the alchemist engaged a complex mechanical engine—

which powers the laboratory even now—and took to the heavens.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Doxius requires vast quantities of sentient-humanoid spinal fluid to power the laboratory's alchemical processes. In order to harvest this fuel, Doxius has depopulated several planets. Once it lands on a world, animated metal amalgamations emerge from the Sky-Iron Skull and seek out sentient humanoids, harvesting slaves for their master.

Doxius can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Savior.** Doxius knows how to grant eternal life and will grant it to you—for a price.
- **A Quest Giver.** Doxius doesn't care what kind of sentient humanoid powers its machines. Orcs and goblins work just as well as elves and humans.
- **A Sage.** Doxius can recall virtually any alchemical formula a character can imagine, and is willing to share that knowledge—again, for a price.
- **A Villain.** The Sky-Iron Skull has landed near the heroes' area of operation. Intelligent creatures are being harvested. Doxius has coerced the local ruler into feeding its alchemical machines in return for extending the ruler's life.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Doxius's goal is to subvert as many civilizations as possible, in order to always have a readily-available supply of "fuel." It finds its construct servants to be infinitely preferable to short-lived mortals. It seeks to infuse mortal life-forces into mechanical bodies.

FLAWS

Doxius is arrogant and susceptible to flattery. If someone sufficiently praises its genius, the mechano-lich tends to overlook any threat it might pose. In addition, it assumes that no living creature could rival its intellect; it dismisses mere mortals as impossibly stupid. It's possible for a clever hero to get into Doxius's inner circle through clever flattery and acting stupid.

Secondly, Doxius thinks its mechanical body is invulnerable. The body is indeed almost impossible to damage. However, it not only consumes alchemical fuel at a prodigious rate, it also relies on the assistance of mechanical constructs for maintenance and repair. Doxius can never spend more than a few days outside the Sky-Iron Skull.

In addition, the crystal jar which contains its organic remains is relatively fragile, though it is surpassingly difficult to target it. When a critical hit is scored against Doxius with a weapon attack, the player who rolled the critical hit should roll another d20. On a second natural 20, the crystal jar shatters, Doxius is reduced to 0 hits points, and its body falls to pieces.

DOXIUS ORBATER

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d10 + 36)

Speed 50 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 112 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) |

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +8, Wis +9, Cha +8

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

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned

Senses truesight 120 ft.

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Adamantine Body. Any critical hit against Doxius becomes a normal hit

Avoidance. If Doxius 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.

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

Turn Immunity. Doxius is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Doxius can use its Alchemical Jet or Fluid Harvest. It then makes two Battery attacks with its adamantine fists.

Battery. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Fluid Harvest. Doxius targets up to three creatures that it can see within 10 feet of it. Each target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 21 (6d6) necrotic damage, and Doxius regains hit points equal to the total damage dealt to all targets.

Alchemical Jet (Recharge 5-6). Doxius emits a lethal cocktail of alchemical fluids. Each creature in a 60-foot cone must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Doxius 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. Doxius regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Jets of Flights. Doxius springs upward and flies up to half its speed. Doxius must end this movement on solid ground or fall.

Alchemical Exhaust. Doxius's exhaust stacks fill the area around it with toxic, corrosive smoke. Each creature within 20 feet of Doxius, including around a corner, must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be blinded and poisoned until the end of Doxius's next turn. A creature that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to this effect until the end of Doxius's next turn.

Fluid Harvest (Costs 2 Actions). Each creature within 30 feet of Doxius must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature's hit point maximum is reduced by 10 (3d6). If a creature's hit point maximum is reduced to 0 by this effect, the creature dies. A creature's hit point maximum can be restored with the greater restoration spell or similar magic.

Flurry of Adamantine Blows (Costs 3 Actions). Doxius makes four Battery attacks against one creature it can see within 10 feet of it.



THE SKY-IRON SKULL

Map: Dyson Logos

Doxius's abode travels from plane to plane and through the stars, thanks to its inherent magic and Doxius's alchemy. Sheets of alchemical crystal cover the eye and nose cavities of the Skull.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Light. Every space within the Skull has bright light coming from tubes containing luminescent green gas.

Materials. The Skull is made of a dull gray metal with streaks of silvery metal flowing in veins like blood. Each space is crammed with junk, pieces of scrap metal, and alchemical apparatus.

Ceilings. 15 feet high and each square is 5 feet.

Alchemical Servitors. Every minute the intruders spend within the Skull, bits of junk assemble into vaguely humanoid shapes and attack. Treat these shapes as animated armor. Two servitors assemble for every character. Creatures in the company of Doxius aren't attacked, and Doxius can order the servitors to stand down.

Out and About. There's a 25% chance that Doxius is 'at home.' Otherwise, the lich-chemist is away, either securing more 'fuel' for the Skull or furthering its nefarious plans.

AREA 1

Approaching the teeth causes one to retract, revealing a staircase spiraling upwards. No servitors attack in the entrance/staircase.

AREA 2

The stairs end in a rectangular room. At one end is a large crystal window which covers the space that might be called the Skull's "nose." When the first hero enters this space, start a timer. The servitors begin their attacks after 1 minute. When you roll initiative, stop the timer. When combat ends, start the timer again and repeat the process until the heroes are slain or Doxius is destroyed.

AREA 3

2d12 Crates are carefully stacked here amid the junk. Each crate contains twelve crystal bottles of glowing green alchemical compound, each of which is a vial of alchemist's fire. The bottles throw dim light for 10 feet. If 'clever' heroes use these as weapons against Doxius or its servitors, rather than deal fire damage the compound instead restores 1d4 hit points to a target at the start of each of its turns. Outside the Skull, it's normal alchemist's fire.

AREA 3A

This smaller room is dominated by an apparatus growing out of the Skull's walls. Crystal pipes and coils bubble with glowing green fluid, appearing and disappearing into the walls and the apparatus, which powers the Skull. There's a flexible metal hose with a fitting customized to recharge the fluids in Doxius's adamantine body.

There's also a crystal jar with a humanoid in it. When it sees the heroes, it scrabbles at the jar and silently screams as though begging for release. The jar's cover is easily removed, and the prisoner rescued. It shares no language with the heroes and is quite mad from having its life-force slowly and excruciatingly drained away to power the Skull. If the heroes have access to a comprehend languages spell or similar magic, amid its ravings they learn the following:

- Doxius is from a faraway world.
- The Skull can't be harmed and siphons life energy from sentient creatures to power itself.
- Without the Skull's apparatus, Doxius can't regenerate.
- The Skull flies through space, time, and the planes.
- The creature is in no condition to help the heroes.

AREA 4

Laboratory. Doxius conducts experiments here. The room is dominated by a long rectangular table

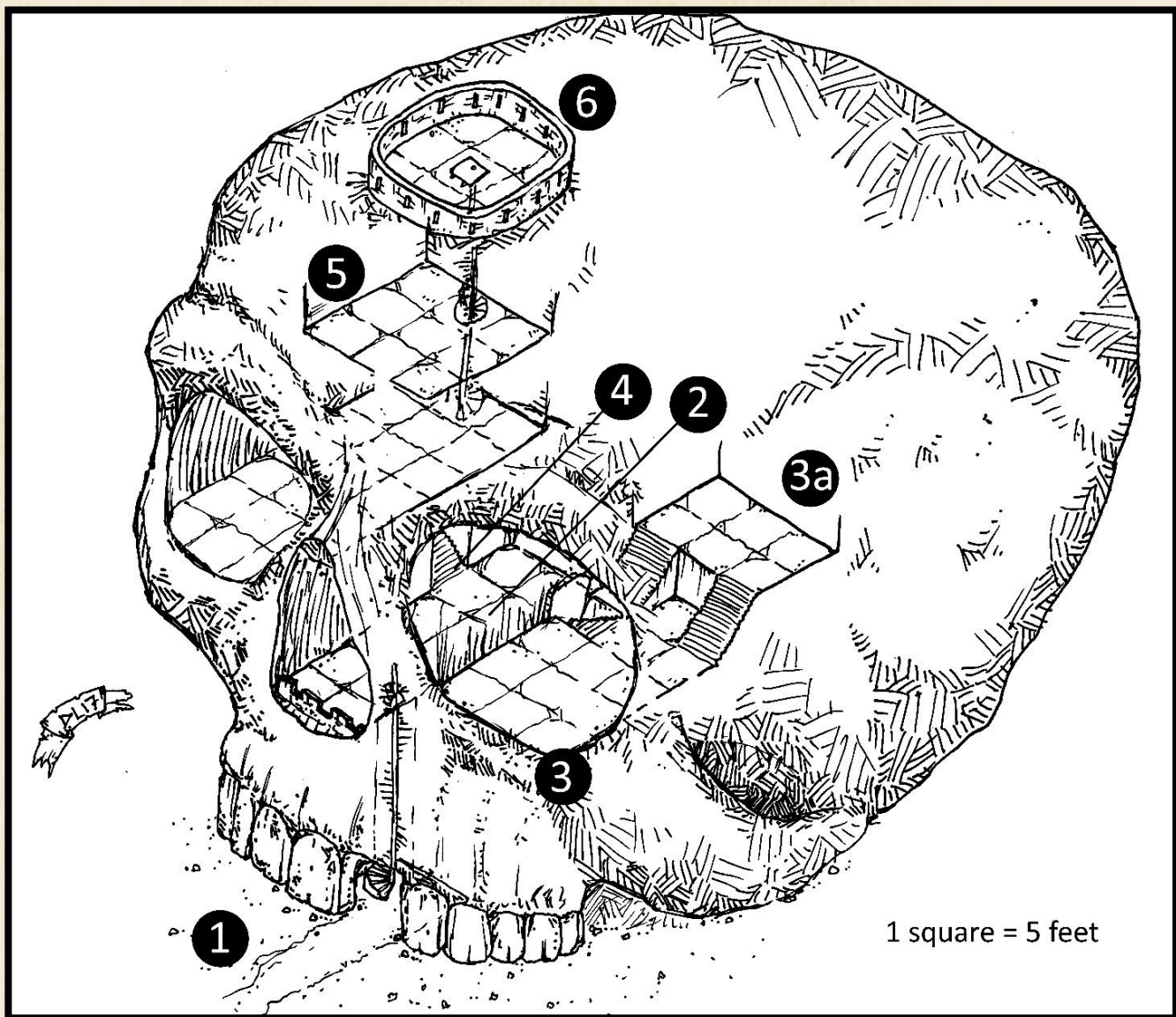
through which flows the 'veins' of silvery metal and from which sprouts several crystal pipes that run up to the ceiling. The silvery metal has also formed shackles which bind the flayed corpse of a humanoid.

AREA 5

Inner Sanctum. If Doxius is at home, this is where it'll be found. The room is remarkably tidy, the only furnishing a metal chair from which sprout several flexible metal hoses. Like Area 3a, Doxius replenishes its precious alchemical fluids here, a process which takes a long rest.

AREA 6

Observation Platform. When the Skull is flying, whether through sky, space, or the planes, Doxius controls it from here. When the Skull is at rest, the trap door is another way an intruder can gain access. Doxius doesn't bother to lock it, secure in the knowledge the Skull's infinite servitors can deal with anyone foolhardy enough to enter.



THE DROWNED LORD

By: Fil Kearney

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

The cursed spirit of a privateer rules the deep sea with legions of undead at its command.

BACKGROUND

Local history recalls when neighboring coastal nations waged war over disputed trade routes. The Lord of a small fief at the border between nations had been called to serve as Captain of a naval ship. When the nations truced, the Lord's fief had been surrendered to the enemy nation, leaving the Captain and crew without a home to return to.

The Captain Lord defected and continued to raid the enemy nation's merchant ships, hunted by both nations as one of several renegade ships displaced by the treaty.

In an effort to unite the pirates, the Captain Lord made a pact with the Great Old One That Sleeps Beneath the Waves. Through the power of this pact, the Lord gathered the stray ships into a fleet and seized the waterways of both nations.

At the height of the Captain Lord's power, both nations launched fleets to destroy the united pirate ships. As the ships swarmed in assault, the sea turned to storm and all three fleets were swallowed by the depths, drowning thousands in sacrifice to the Great Old One That Sleeps Beneath the Waves.

Ever since, the souls of the dead drift through the currents, still led by their Drowned Lord to slay their enemies from both nations. Ships at sea are lost to sudden storms, losing their entire crew to the Drowned as the undead attack from the cresting waves crashing across the tossed ship decks.

Now missing ships can be found drifting abandoned, luring scavengers to risk the storms for abandoned salvage.



CURRENT MOTIVES

The Drowned Lord has been raiding coastal communities to add more minions to its legion of the Drowned. Each town slain emboldens the Drowned Lord to raid the next until an army of undead swarm the sea.

The Drowned Lord is likely to be encountered during one of these activities:

- **Collecting Souls.** The Drowned Lord and its minions will always attack vessels at sea to slay the crew and raise them as servants to the Drowned Lord.

- **Vengeance.** The Drowned Lord is still waging war against the nations of its past. Any ship or coastal village that can be reached will be attacked.
- **Drawn to Storms.** The Drowned Lord and its minions come to the surface of the water during storms. The power of the Old One lingers within the undead, and that power can be felt most during storms.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

The Drowned Lord still seeks to destroy the nations that once hunted the renegade sailors. When the fleets of its enemy are finally exhausted, the dead will come ashore and drive the people away from the waters, lest they be killed and join the Drowned.

The Drowned Lord seeks atonement from its patron. The Great Old One That Sleeps Beneath the Waves no longer hears the silent pleading of the Drowned Lord. Any opportunity to reunite with its Patron will become an immediate priority.

FLAWS

The Drowned Lord is lonely and can be persuaded with promises to reunite it with the Great Old One That Sleeps Beneath the Waves.

TACTICS AND ENCOUNTER IDEAS

- During a storm at sea, The Drowned Lord and its minions rides the waves crashing across the deck of a ship to attack any brave sailor steering the ship. If not killed by the attacks, the force of the waves knock targets into the water to drown.
- The Drowned Lord rises through the hull beneath water to invade the lower decks of a ship with its minions, attempting to catch the crew by surprise. If the encounter occurs at night, the ambushers attempt to kill the crew in their sleep. Those that die and rise as drowned specters themselves (see stat block) to kill those still alive. Once all are slain, the Drowned return to the sea, leaving the ship as a derelict.
- The Drowned Lord and its minions drift ashore at night to plague coastal communities. They float into the homes of the living to Life Drain and Drown them in Silence as they sleep, attempting to raise more drowned specters who join the massacre.

THE DROWNED LORD

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 6 (-2) | 16 (+3) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) |

Damage Resistance acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The Drowned Lord can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Water-bound. While on land, the Drowned Lord has disadvantage on attack rolls and can't use reactions.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Drowned Lord makes one attack with its Life Drain and uses Drown in Silence.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (3d6 + 1) necrotic damage. The target 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.

Drown in Silence. The Drowned Lord targets up to three creatures within 10 feet of it that have reduced hit point maximums from the Drowned Lord's Life Drain. The target becomes incapacitated while violently vomiting sea water and begins drowning. The target can attempt on DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, removing the incapacitated condition on a success.

Raise Drowned Specter. The Drowned Lord targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that it has killed. The target's spirit rises as a drowned specter in the space of

its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The new drowned specter has the same statistics as The Drowned Lord and is under its creator's control. The Drowned Lord has no limit to how many Drowned Specters it can control. A drowned specter can also raise other drowned specters with this trait, but a drowned specter can have no more than seven other drowned specters under its control.

EPHRAM PERIWINKLE

By: Alan Tucker

Artist: Dean Spencer

Bards from the College of Lore have a thirst for knowledge...but what happens when the rest of their party doesn't share in it?

BACKGROUND

Ephram Periwinkle's love of trivia and knowledge in general led him to the Bardic College of Lore in his youth. He became a spinner of tall tales and gained a bit of renown—though mostly for his inability to not share all the knowledge he acquired during his travels rather than his story-telling prowess.

One day, Ephram and his companions stumbled upon the lair of a powerful necromancer and fell to the dark wizard's magics. Ephram's talents, however, amused the necromancer and he decided to grant the curse of unlife to the ebullient bard. The skeletal Ephram has guarded an important door in the wizard's dungeon for many, many years in an unorthodox manner.

Upon encountering Ephram within his cage, the skeletal head perks up and says, "To unlock this door, you must answer these riddles, four!" If asked, Ephram recites the first riddle, but won't wait for an answer, instead regaling the party with trivial knowledge about anything that pops into his head.

The cage does not have any visible means of getting inside. There is no door and no lock. It was evidently constructed around Ephram's body. DMs can use the stats for a normal **skeleton** (CR ¼; MM, p 272) for Ephram.



THE RIDDLES

- 1) "What has a head and a tail, can flip but has no legs?" **Answer:** A coin.

Additional commentary from Ephram: "Speaking of tails, did you know the tail of a red dragon can grow up to 30 feet long? And their teeth can pierce stone and even metal! That's how they can eat armored knights who try to slay them..."

- 2) "I can build castles, I can stop a flood, I can show the time flow, I can make people blind, I can make others see. What am I?"
Answer: Sand

Additional commentary from Ephram: “Have you ever been to [a king in your campaign]’s castle? I have and let me tell you it is a sight to behold! There are hundreds of people there who do nothing but tend the lush gardens and...”

- 3) “Names give power, Magic to control. But what is broken, by naming it?” **Answer:** Silence

Additional commentary from Ephram: “You know, the study of magic has been going on for thousands of years. The greatest practitioner of magic was...”

- 4) “You keep it, but it never ages. Once shared it is gone forever.” **Answer:** Secret

Additional commentary from Ephram: “Speaking of age, did you know the oldest creature in the realms is actually a tree? The druids call it ‘Gnarlwood’ and it lives in the...”

If the party manages to fight through all of Ephram’s prattling and give him the correct answers, he looks surprised as an ancient, rusted key materializes in his bony hand. “No one has ever stayed to listen to all the riddles before. I can’t imagine why! I’m sure there are riches beyond compare beyond the door. That reminds me, did you know the richest man to ever live was...”

CURRENT MOTIVES

Ephram Periwinkle simply wants to impart his vast store of useless knowledge on anyone who will listen. He is only vaguely aware of his predicament and state of undeath.

Ephram can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** Though his information may be outdated, Ephram is nothing but a font of endless trivia about the land and its inhabitants—if the party can pluck the wheat from the chaff of his nonsense, that is!

- **An Amusing Sidebar to an Otherwise Dark Adventure.** Comic relief is an important part of any story. Use Ephram to dispense important bits of lore about your world in an amusing way.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Ephram simply wants an audience to impart his wealth of knowledge to. He will beg and plead with the party to stay and allow him to entertain them with stories.

FLAWS

This should be obvious by now.

FABIUS, THE BARD-EATER

By: Jean Lorber

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Map: Jean Lorber

This undead narcissist must consume the souls of successful bards or other performers in order to survive. He has attracted past victims by staging shows at his tavern, killing the performer afterwards. But his next show is rumored to be terrible, which could force him to take desperate measures.

"Wow, that bard is really captivating my audience. His soul is going to taste great..."

BACKGROUND

During his adventuring career, the narcissistic bard Fabius achieved a measure of fame. Stories and songs were written about his exploits, including the popular: *'Nine Trolls Were Nothing to Me'* and *'The Handsome Savior of Phandalin'*.

Upon retiring, he opened a tavern which featured only songs and plays dedicated to his exploits. This echo chamber for his ego turned him into a raging narcissist and eventually took a dark turn; he turned to necromancy to extend his precious life.

He acquired a dark ritual and sacrificed an adoring fan to begin it. But Fabius was overconfident—he botched the ritual which began to melt his body. In a panic, he sealed himself using the closest objects within reach: loose scrolls and magic items from around the chamber. His body now gone, he is an animate collection of wrappings and parchment.

For all the flaws in its execution, the ritual did create a perverse way for Fabius to extend his life: kill a performer suffused with positive energy from a crowd. Such a murder grants him another few months of existence. Without this boost, he withers and dies.



Too creepy to be seen now, Fabius secretly runs his operation from a lair under his tavern. His psyche has been eroding, slowly sliding towards undead fixations and musings. He is no longer able to truly conceive of, let alone create, songs and plays that normal audiences would enjoy. His latest love song was a creepy flop entitled *'I held her beating heart in my hands'*. Audiences are also tiring of hearing about Fabius's past adventures. The buzz around town is that his next show is going to be terrible. For Fabius, bad reviews could mean death.

CURRENT MOTIVES

It's been a while since Fabius last killed a performer, and he is furiously preparing for a show (see *'A Typical Show'*). He has enslaved several writers who have been charged with creating new hits about him. The terrified bards labor away in Fabius's lair, hoping that their work appeals to their insane captor. Fabius has hired an unwitting

troupe to perform the new show. If it is a success, the lead performer goes missing just afterwards.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Fabius wants to stop worrying about his (un)life ending every few months. He's looking for a more powerful necromantic ritual to stabilize him, and without intervention from the adventurers, he soon finds it!

In this new ritual, Fabius siphons the life force of the entire crowd, as well as the performing bard, killing them all (see 'The Big Show'). Once it is complete, Fabius turns his recently deceased audience into a singing undead force and begins a reign of terror. His goal: for everyone in town to know his name and fear it!

UTILITY

Fabius is best suited for an urban setting where a multitude of taverns and bards would be present. He can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Secretly Crazy Patron.** A bard could be recruited by Fabius's "talent scout", looking for a headliner (aka victim) for the next show. The scout seems a little fishy, but the pay is good! If the bard performs well, Fabius tries to kill them after the show.
- **Source of an Unknown Sickness.** The adventurers hear that the region's bards seem to be suffering from a wasting disease, called *The Bard Eater*. An investigation reveals that untalented bards have been sickened while the better performers...are nowhere to be found. Music critics have also suffered similar symptoms. Their only common bad review was Fabius's show.
- **Kidnapper at Large.** The adventurers could be approached by the family of a young bard. They fear he's been kidnapped...or worse. The last they saw of him, he was practicing for a new job,

singing about a washed-up old bard named Fabius.

- **A Fun Diversion Turned Deathtrap.** The adventurers may simply be in the audience during Fabius's Big Show. Sensing the necromantic thrall placed on the audience, they could seek out Fabius's lair and stop him before the ritual is complete.

FLAWS

Fabius is vain and very sensitive about his legacy. He is subject to flattery and can be distracted if asked to talk about himself or his past deeds.

To power his life-sustaining necromancy, he desperately needs good performances. He hesitates to kill any adventurer that could potentially perform at that level, choosing instead to capture and retrain them.

FABIUS THE BARD-EATER

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)

Speed 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) |

Skills Intimidation +6, Performance +5, Persuasion -1

Senses passive Perception 9

Damage immunities necrotic

Damage vulnerabilities fire

Languages Common, Elven, Dwarven, Abyssal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

After Show Kiss. Fabius drains the life from a target, as per the spell vampiric touch. This power is available to Fabius only if the target has succeeded on a DC 15 Performance check within the last hour.

Body parts. Fabius's body consists of countless layers of scrolls and papers, mixed with a few magic items (see Equipment below). Pulling an item off Fabius does no damage to him and requires a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check. If a creature rips off an outer layer of paper, roll a d6 and consult the table below to determine its nature.

| ROLL | SCROLL CONTENTS |
|------|---|
| 1 | A fragment of some dumb song |
| 2 | A dictated list of Fabius's major accomplishments |
| 3 | A list of cult members (cult is DMs choice) |
| 4 | A partial map to a dragon's hoard |
| 5 | A scroll of faerie fire |
| 6 | A scroll of hypnotic pattern |

Paper-thin. As an Action, Fabius can move through an opening as narrow as 1 inch-wide without squeezing. Worn items larger than the opening fall off him at the opening.

Spellcasting. Fabius is a 5th level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips: *blade ward, vicious mockery, chill touch*

1st Level (4 slots): *disguise self, Tasha's hideous laughter, thunderwave, command (from wand)*

2nd Level (2 slots): *crown of madness, hold person (from wand)*

3rd Level (1 slot): *bestow curse*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Fabius can make 2 Claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

EQUIPMENT

Helm of teleportation, wand of binding, wand of fear

FLAYESS, NECROMANCER'S APPRENTICE

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 34 (6d8+6)

Speed 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 8 (-1) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) |

Skills Deception +3, Religion +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Spellcasting. Flayess is a 3rd level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips: *chill touch*

1st Level (2 slots): *Inflict wounds, ray of sickness*

2nd Level (1 slot): *Ray of enfeeblement*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (d4+1) piercing damage.

SWARM OF SKELETAL FLYING FISH

Medium swarm of tiny undead, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 28 (8d8-8)

Speed swim 20 ft., fly 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 9 (-1) | 1 (-5) | 7 (-2) | 2 (-4) |

Damage Resistance piercing, slashing

Senses passive Perception 15

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Pool-bound. The swarm can only fly up to 30 feet away from the pool.

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 single, Tiny skeleton. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bite (swarm has more than half HP). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 12 (4d6) piercing damage.

Bite (swarm has half HP or less). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 6 (2d6) piercing damage.

UNDEAD GIANT BEETLE

Medium undead, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 10 (4d6-4)

Speed 20 ft., fly 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 11 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 9 (-1) | 2 (-4) | 7 (-2) | 2 (-4) |

Damage Resistance piercing, slashing

Senses passive Perception 8

Challenge 1/8 (200 XP)

Distracting Flutter. The beetle lands on the face of a target, flapping its wings and sticking its legs in the target's mouth. The target has Disadvantage on all attack rolls and saving throws until it is killed or removed with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4-1) piercing damage.

THE BARD'S DELIGHT

Fabius's lair is in two main sections: his tavern and a secret set of chambers beneath it.

THE BARD'S DELIGHT TAVERN AND PLAYHOUSE

The tavern exists to enable good performances, which Fabius then uses to fuel his unlife. Entertainment ranges from music to theatrical productions, always upbeat, crowd-pleasing numbers about Fabius's past exploits. The cheery, poppy music will sound extra creepy as the PCs delve under the tavern, uncovering the horror below.

A half-elf woman named **Flayess** (see stat block) manages the business for Fabius. She is a necromancer adept, loyal to Fabius. She dresses in practical maroon silks and smells strongly of incense.

During the day, Flayess handles affairs in her office (Area 1D) but also runs errands like buying ritual components. She also serves as his talent scout, looking for bards to be their next victim. During a show, she greets the regular customers, then quietly slips away to the ritual room (Area 6) to assist Fabius.

A TYPICAL SHOW

The establishment puts on one show a week which might or might not be good enough to feed Fabius via his initial necromantic ritual. Fabius himself watches each show (using *disguise self*), ready to pounce if it is good enough. To determine each show's success, roll a Charisma (Performance) Check for the performing bard on stage (+2 bonus).

If the result is 14 or less, the audience doesn't love the performance and Fabius's ritual isn't energized (see Area 6 for details). A disappointed Fabius doesn't kill the performer, but he does kick them out while punitively casting *ray of sickness* on them.

If the result is 15 or higher, the audience's delight imbues Fabius's ritual with energy! Fabius must now kill the performing bard in order to consume the energy. The adventurers might witness a disguised Fabius push through the audience to the secret door in Area 1B, then to the ritual room (Area 6). Note that the audience themselves do not suffer any ill effects from this version of the ritual.

THE BIG SHOW

If Fabius's new, more deadly necromantic ritual is completed, he spends most of his money to stage a 3-act musical to bring in a big crowd. This version of the ritual seeks only to consume an audience's lifeforce, ensnaring them via the performance.

Once the musical begins, the ritual is triggered, targeting the audience (**commoners**). Each person that can hear the performance is the target of *charm person* (2nd level, save DC 13). Assume 2/3 of audience fails their saving throw. Any target that fails seems hypnotized by the show, turns very pale, and is unaware of their surroundings. The target also loses 2 hit points. The target can repeat the saving throw after each act (note that a commoner has only 4 hit points). The performers are unaffected (Fabius needs them to finish the show).

As long as the performance is ongoing, the ritual's effects are active. Ending the performance ends all the effects, but also causes each target to take an additional 4 necrotic damage; most audience members would be killed. Any adventurer attempting to end the performance should first be made aware of these potentially deadly effects.

After 3 acts, the audience is all dead, Fabius's ritual is complete: his lifeforce is stable now (his hit points double). He crashes up through the stage trapdoor, laughing. He animates several of the audience who dance a grim macabre around him. Fabius then takes his new, undead troupe to a nearby alehouse, to slaughter all within.

There are two ways to defeat Fabius and keep the audience alive:

- Find and break the ritual circle in Area 6 before the 2nd act begins (20 minutes). Fabius, Flayess, and the fish are be waiting.
- Overpower Fabius's ritual using another performance: a BATTLE OF THE BANDS! If the adventurers can improvise any sort of entertainment (song, dance, act, acrobatics) and succeed on a DC 15 group Charisma (Performance) check, then the audience is gently detached from Fabius's ritual. Allow for enthusiastic roleplaying to suffice for the check! An enraged Fabius then bursts through the floor and attacks the adventurers.

1A) STAGE AND MAIN HALL

As the party enters Area 1A, read the following:

A large stage overtakes the space inside this cozy, festive tavern hall. Musicians are warming up on stage, the scenery from past productions behind them. Patrons are tucking into sumptuous dishes like roast duck and honey-glazed owlbear steaks.

A large, raised stage is the central feature of the main room. Moveable canvas frames are painted with background scenery and any number of props are in place. A handful of musicians provide the show's score.

To put the crowd in a good mood, the tavern serves excellent fare at very reasonable prices. During a show, free drinks are given out and beautiful people (hired models) mingle with the audience, exclaiming how wonderful the show is.

A curtain separates the stage from backstage. There is a trapdoor in the middle of the stage, used by Fabius to send his bard victim directly to the necromantic ritual circle. The trapdoor is

noticeable with a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check on the stage.

A clue that all is not right is a frightened-looking scribe named Mitella (**commoner**) in the audience. She has been charged by Fabius to note the audience's reactions to certain songs, scenes or jokes. If the show isn't going well, Mitella is terrified of reporting back to Fabius. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check causes her to reveal her job. She's only met Fabius in the shadowy backstage and doesn't know his true nature. She doesn't know about the secret door either.

1B) BACKSTAGE

This space is cluttered with all the accoutrements needed for a show: costumes, prop weapons, and smaller pieces of unused scenery. The northeast corner of the room also hides a secret door; a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) reveals its presence.

During shows, a bored **thug** (CR ½; MM, p 350) named Grits guards the door, posing as an extra or stagehand (he knows nothing about musical theatre).

1C) KITCHEN

A dozen cooks and wait staff (**commoners**) handle the food service side of the operation. Anyone entering the kitchen is promptly shouted at by the head chef; a furious, mustachioed halfling named Gustoffle Herringbone. None of the staff know of Fabius's true nature. With a 5 gp bribe, any of the wait staff nervously relate that "something creepy" is going on in the back rooms.

1D) TAVERN OFFICE

Flayess' office is unremarkable, with a desk and sleeping quarters. A search of her desk reveals a purse with 40 gp and a ledger. Inside the ledger is a sketch of a necromantic ritual, identifiable as such to anyone succeeding on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Around the corner is a small, locked safe which holds 500 gp. The lock can be opened with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check

using thieves' tools, or the key which Flayess carries in her pocket.

1E) PRIVY

This is a well-maintained bathroom with an elderly gnome attendant, name Pippy, who is polite and discreet.

1F) STOREROOM

This room holds foodstuffs (sacks of flour, barrels of pickles) as well as spare furniture and parts.

2. TRAPPED HALLWAY

Read or summarize:

Rough-hewn steps descend into the gloom below. A long hallway is dimly lit by candles on the walls. The faint sound of splashing water echoes off the walls.

Fabius constructed a hazard here that his minions know how to circumvent. A constructed pond at the end of the hallway is filled with black water and is home to a **swarm of skeletal flying fish** (see stat block) audibly splashing around. The fish fly out and attack anyone entering the room, unless they are first given a special food, located in an alcove next to the stairs. The food has a foul odor, noticeable with a DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Scraps of parchment litter the hallway. Any inspection reveals that they are drafts of music or plays. These are a captive bard's older drafts, which Fabius edited and rejected. Two exchanges are clues to the dynamics at play here:

- *"What if I write an edgy ballad about you as a complicated, complex hero? I'm tired of writing empty crowd-pleasers."* The editorial note in response, written in blood: *"What if...I killed you? Your idea is terrible. Crowd-pleasers is what I need!"*
- *"I think a second hero, a sidekick of course, would go over well."* The editorial response: *"I will literally kick your sides open. Only one hero and that's ME!"*

3. ALCOVE AND HALLWAY

Read or summarize:

Tall shelves stuffed with books and loose parchment line the walls of this hallway. A small alcove is located further ahead on the left.

The bookshelves are filled with collections of songs and plays from around Faerun, most in poor condition. In combat, Fabius uses his *Paper Thin* feature to slip behind the shelves, granting him half-cover while casting spells. A shelf can be pulled over with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

The alcove contains a bowl of treats for the skeletal fish as well as a dormant **minotaur skeleton** (CR 2; MM, p 273), hidden under a heavy blanket. The skeleton attacks at Fabius's or Flayess's command or if any outsider's spell is cast within 15 feet of it.

4. WRITING ROOM

Read or summarize:

This rock-walled chamber is a jail cell: a wall of iron bars across the entrance, an iron door secured with a padlock, and empty shackles hanging from the far wall. A halfling sits at a crude desk, head held in hands. A large, dead beetle sits at his feet, surrounded by crumpled balls of paper.

The halfling is a captive **bard** (CR 2; VGtM, p 211) named Reeb Janglehat. Fabius hired him last year to write new, crowd-pleasing stories and songs about him. Reeb turned out a hit song or two but has been suffering writer's block for a while now. With Fabius as a boss, that could be deadly. Reeb is imprisoned here but bought himself some time by tricking two other singers into Fabius's lair. Fabius keeps them as scribes in his studio.

Reeb is currently locked in this room until he produces a new song for Fabius to review. The padlock can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or unlocked

with the key in Fabius's studio desk. Reeb communicates with Fabius using a **giant undead beetle** (see stat block) at his feet: he pins a draft scroll to the beetle's carapace, and it trundles over to Fabius's studio.

Reeb tells the adventurers about Fabius's history, while lying about his own role in capturing the other bards. He attacks along with Fabius, if so commanded. But, with shaming role-playing and a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Reeb fights alongside the adventurers.

5. FABIUS'S STUDIO

Read or summarize:

The short hallway ends at a door, slightly ajar. The hallway before the door widens and a heavy curtain stretches across an alcove to the left.

The curtained-off alcove is where Fabius practices scenes, containing stage props and costumes. Four **skeletons** (CR ¼; MM, p 272) lay inert here but animate if Fabius is attacked.

Once inside the room, read the following:

Inside the chamber, a long red carpet leads to an ornate desk, cluttered with stage props and scrolls. Behind the desk is a large banner, the faded marquee sign of an old Waterdavian theatre production. Two desks sit off to the side, occupied by manacled humans, who are busy copying something into ledgers.

When not in his ritual room or watching the show upstairs, Fabius is here, vainly attempting to develop new songs and shows about himself. He paces back and forth behind his desk, spitting out creepy, nonsensical lyrics and ideas, expecting two exhausted, captive bards (**commoners**) to catch every syllable.

So focused is Fabius that his passive Perception is 6 and he only notices fighting if it happens within five feet of his studio door. The scribes notice snooping adventurers first, and silently beg them

for help! If alone, they relate that Fabius is undead, crazy, and wants to kill a bard.

Examining Fabius's desk reveals his theatrical past and a clue to his oversized ego; old playbills and letters from adoring fans are visible. It also holds 50 gp, the key to padlocked door at Area 5, and a packet of *dust of dryness*. A *helm of teleportation* sits in the clutter (unless Fabius dons it before a fight).

6. NECROMANTIC RITUAL ROOM

Read or summarize:

A heavy, wooden door is covered in chalk scrawls. A skull is embedded in the wood at eye level.

The door to this room is unlocked but guarded by a skull embedded in the wood (1HP, use **bard** ability scores and skills). The skull requires any person besides Fabius to match its off-key singing before opening; a successful DC 8 Charisma (Performance) check or actual player singing will suffice. Without this, she emits a wail that draws Fabius's attention wherever he is.

Once the PCs can see the interior of the room, describe it as follows:

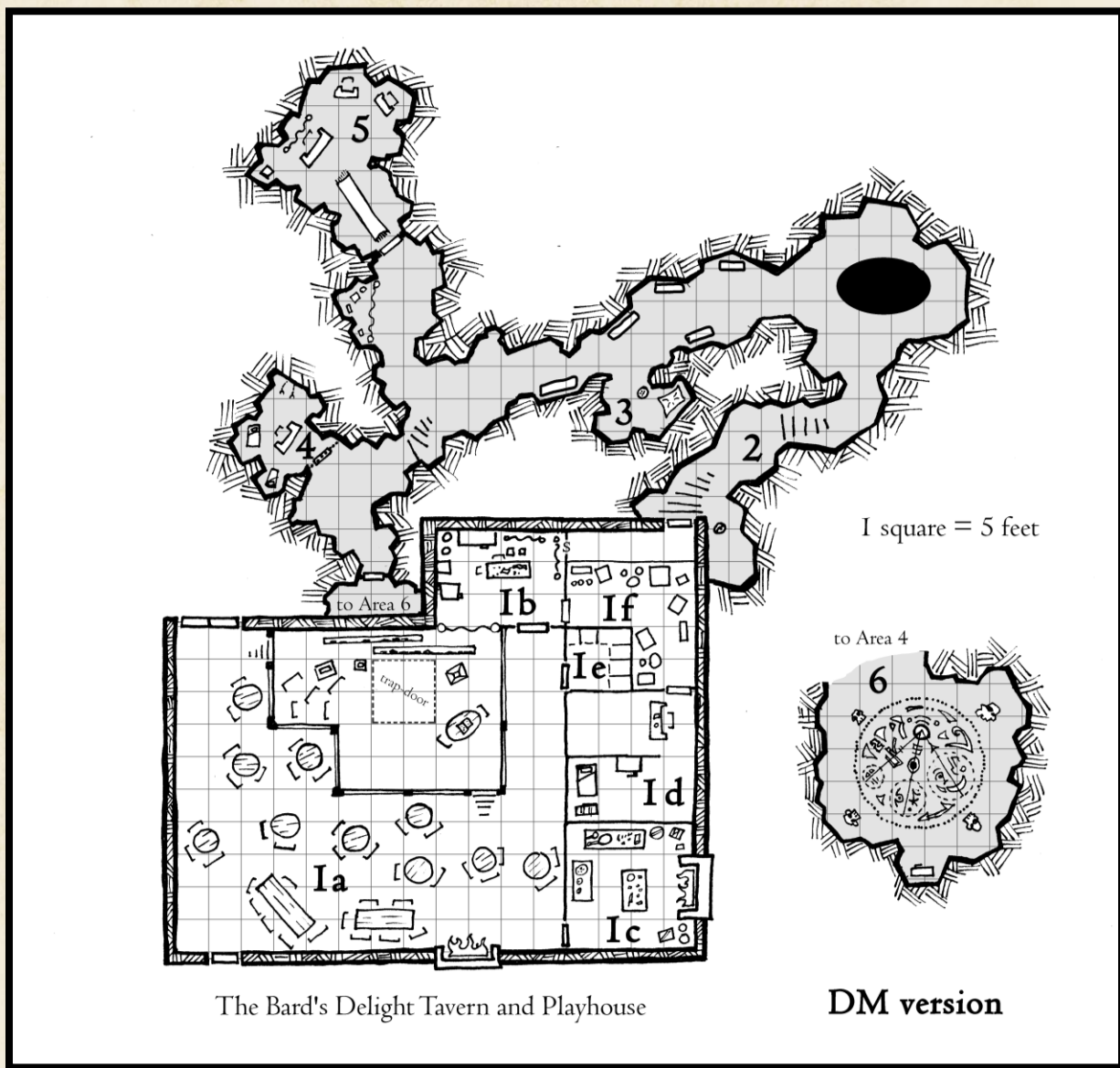
A 20-foot-wide circle has been etched into the floor of this rock-walled chamber. The circle has been chalked and is filled with hand-drawn arcane runes and script. Several broken instruments line the walls, along with skulls wearing fanciful hats.

Fabius has constructed his necromantic ritual here, directly under the stage. The skulls lining the room are grisly trophies from his past victims. The ritual may be his initial version (see A Typical Show) or his upgraded one (see The Big Show). In either case, the ritual circle serves as a necromantic funnel, sending energy or lifeforce from the tavern above into the circle's runes. To release the energy and replenish his own lifeforce, Fabius must kill the performer responsible for generating the energy.

To destroy the ritual, the circle (which is carved into the stone floor) must be altered; a successful DC 8 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals this fact. Altering the chalk runes and glyphs once the ritual is active has no effect. With relevant tools (e.g. mason's tools) or appropriate edged weapons, a creature may sufficiently etch the floor with 2 actions. Altering the circle triggers a *glyph of warding*, causing 11 (2d10) necrotic damage to anyone in the room. The glyph is visible with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

THE AFTERMATH

With Fabius gone, the tavern and playhouse need new management. I hear there's good money in show business.



GRAVEN BLOODSTONE

By: Stacey Allan

Artist: Dean Spencer

For six millennia, Graven Bloodstone's spirit has been restless. A dwarven warlord from a forgotten time, Bloodstone was betrayed and entombed in the vaults of a keep built on the ruins of his own kingdom. Now he has arisen to savagely plunder castles across the Dessarin Valley, hell-bent on unearthing his closest comrades from their graves.

BACKGROUND

Graven Bloodstone led the militia under Torhild Flametongue, founder of the ancient dwarven city of Besilmer: an aboveground settlement, built in the Dessarin Valley nearly six thousand years ago. Besilmer endured constant raids from trolls and giants in its three-hundred-year existence. When Torhild was killed by the hill giant Crowsag, the impulsive Graven Bloodstone declared himself warlord and gathered his five closest comrades as his council. Besilmer, however, was falling; its clans were in disarray, and Graven's hard-nosed leadership earned him enemies within his own ranks. Many dwarves wished to abandon the city and flee south but Graven dealt harsh punishments to any would-be dissenters. He and his council were betrayed by a cabal of Besilmer elders and captured by Crowsag and his motley horde of trolls, orcs, and goblins. Besilmer fell and the giant kept Bloodstone alive to see the city crumble.

Crowsag built a keep atop the rubble of Besilmer's great hall and buried Graven Bloodstone alive in the building's keystone. The same fate was meted out to the five members of his council, in five different keeps across the Dessarin Valley and beyond. But Graven's soul didn't pass quietly into the afterlife: his vengeful spirit haunted the chambers of Crowsag's keep, eventually driving its inhabitants mad. In their hysteria, they turned on one another and the halls ran slick with their blood. Crowsag died in the vaults of the keep,



clawing at the keystone under which Bloodstone was buried.

Bloodstone has haunted Crowsag's keep for nearly six thousand years and his madness has amplified with the passing of time. Now, as a revenant, he's claimed the keep's forgotten riches and the magic weapon used to bury him: the *entombing greataxe*.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Two gods vie for Bloodstone's soul - Dumathoin, the dwarven god of buried secrets, and Bhaal, the evil god of murder. Bloodstone is unaware of this cosmic feud and has just one driving purpose: unearth the five comrades he knew in life from their unbecoming tombs.

Graven has long brooded on Besilmer's fate, and his wrath is mighty. With just one year to complete his mission, he's hired a company of mercenaries, the 'Bloodstones', to aid him on his raids, paying them with coin from Crowsag's vault. The mercenaries consist of **thugs** (CR ½; MM, p 350) and **veterans** (CR 3; MM, p 350). Their numbers fluctuate due to Bloodstone's inclination to murder anyone who irks him; betrayal, theft,

incompetence, or simply not laughing at one of his jokes can stoke his fury. Bloodstone stops at nothing to exhume his allies, and mercilessly slays anyone who stands in his way.

Graven Bloodstone can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** He was alive in a forgotten time and can recall knowledge which predates many historical tomes. He can be persuaded to share this information, if the mood takes him. Dwelling too long on the past, however, soon reminds him of Besilmer's collapse, and his mood can quickly sour.
- **An Employer.** He may hire the characters to exhume one of his comrades from a well-defended castle.
- **An Adversary.** He plunders a keep and murders someone the characters know: or he intends to plunder a keep with which the characters have close ties.
- **An Ally.** If the characters need to infiltrate one of the castles on Bloodstone's list, he may be persuaded to work alongside them.
- **A Quest.** The five castles on Bloodstone's list can be located anywhere in the Dessarin Valley and surrounding area. They could be inhabited or in ruins. Characters may wish to help him uncover the bodies he seeks, or they may want to put a stop to his barbaric plundering. The latter requires a *wish* spell to stop his soul rejuvenating inside another body, if he's slain. Either way, anyone involved with his mission draws the attention of the gods Dumathoin and Bhaal.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Graven has developed a taste for bloodshed and doesn't want to pass quietly into the afterlife once his quest is complete. Upon exhuming his comrades, he wishes to offer his soul and those of his comrades to any god who will listen, in return for eternal life.

FLAWS

Graven has a volatile temper, and he governs his mercenaries with an iron fist, entombing any who betray or displease him in the earth with the flat of his *entombing greataxe*. The ground where he sets up camp is soon peppered with the tops of heads poking out of the dirt - skulls cracked, and in varying states of decay.

He's also emotionally unstable, making him prone to fits of extreme melancholy and exuberant laughter. Whilst he relishes the chance to avenge his comrades, he doesn't know which divine power has given him this opportunity, nor why they waited so long to do so; these questions vex him greatly.



GRAVEN BLOODSTONE

Medium undead, neutral

Armor Class 17 (half plate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) |

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

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Dwarven

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Divine Justice. Bloodstone always knows the direction and distance between himself and the corpses he seeks, and no magic can hide them. He retrieves them one at a time. If Bloodstone's body is destroyed, his soul flies forth to inhabit the corpse of one of his five fallen comrades; he then resumes his quest for the remaining bodies.

Limited Rejuvenation. When Bloodstone's body is destroyed, his soul lingers. After 24 hours, his soul inhabits and animates the corpse of one of his five fallen comrades, and he regains all his hit points. If none of his comrades' bodies remain on this plane of existence, his soul fades to the afterlife. While the soul is bodiless, a wish spell can be used to force the soul to go to the afterlife and not return.

Profane Purpose. Bloodstone has only one year to unearth his five fallen comrades. If he fails to retrieve them before his time runs out, he crumbles to dust and his soul fades to the afterlife. He may seek allies to help him fulfill his quest.

Regeneration. Bloodstone regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn. If he takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn. Bloodstone's body is destroyed only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Turn Immunity. Bloodstone is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bloodstone makes two melee attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) slashing damage. If combat is taking place in a location containing a buried comrade, the target takes an extra 13 (2d12) slashing damage.

Vengeful Glare. When Bloodstone is raiding a location containing a buried comrade, he may target one creature

within 30 feet of him who opposes his mission. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until Bloodstone deals damage to it, or until the end of Bloodstone's next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of Bloodstone 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 Bloodstone, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

FIGHTING GRAVEN BLOODSTONE

Graven Bloodstone is a modified **revenant** (MM, p 259.) Instead of hunting adversaries, he seeks the bodies of his fallen comrades.

ENTOMBING GREATAXE

Weapon (greataxe), rare

The twin heads of this plain, unadorned weapon are chipped and stained with blood. It served as a handaxe when wielded by the hill giant, Crowsak.

Once per day, when this weapon is used to deal damage to a Large or smaller target, the wielder may choose to entomb the target. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be entombed in the ground beneath them. While entombed, the target is restrained, blinded, and begins to suffocate. On its turn, an entombed creature can use its action to make a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check to break free, clawing out of their tomb on a success.

THE GREEN EATER

By: Beth Ball

Artist: Gary Dupuis: Purple Duck Games

An undead plant that retains the desires of its former life of movement and the thrill of combat. Its psyche is fractured, and it exists to grow and devour.

BACKGROUND

Benedikt Taliver broke the paladin oath that had bound him to the magic of the Ancient Gods. What he thought would bring about a release from mental strain, however, served only to further corrupt his mind. He fled into the woods, seeking peace, and was never seen again.

The old growth forest where he sought sanctuary responded to the anger of the Gods. Game vanished from the trails Benedikt wandered, and berries turned to poison in his mouth. He died inside the confines of the forest, and it consumed his life energy.

An angry spirit remained in the corpse's wake; it was divided between its hatred of the natural deities who had formerly bound it and self-loathing for breaking the oath in the first place.

The internal division manifested outwardly. The crumpled pile of bones reknit in the twisted semblance of a skeleton as vines reassembled the body to fit inside the armor. Once more given form, the knight returned. Traces of magic the paladin had previously possessed trickled through reconstructed fingers, only now, they bore the power of undeath.

Like most vines, the Green Eater seeks to expand and grow. It prefers to devour natural energy from a living being, though it can survive through photosynthesis alone. The Green Eater gained its name from its ability to track and devour magical energy, especially from nature-based casters.



CURRENT MOTIVES

The Green Eater has a special hatred of those who wield natural magic and any who have an easy allegiance with their deities. The creature's internal war leaves it undecided as to whether it wants to save others from the fate it has suffered or if it wants to find another way to punish the gods and those who blindly follow them. Either way, the undead vines and armored skeletal body long to consume.

The Green Eater can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Hunter.** The Green Eater may have been summoned to track down a nature-based caster in the party, one of their allies such as a Warlock of the Archfey, or a mystical fey being, like a nymph or dryad.
- **A Guardian.** A powerful fey or dark druid might woo the Green Eater to their control, especially with the promise of a return to power. Adventurers would find a disguised, vine-covered corpse waiting on the edge of a sacred grove or mystical spring and choose whether or not to heed the warning the bones proclaim.
- **A Blight.** The Green Eater would be pleased to join alongside a lich, necromancer, or urban official who wished to bring about an end to a natural environment or troublesome group seeking to protect a forest, park, or other green space.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

On some days, the Green Eater has particularly poignant memories of its life before, even the shadowy recollections of a home, friends, and family. These flashes have built on one another to create an underlying desire to uncover the creature's own past. Even when the Green Eater cannot remember anything of its former life, this passive longing and need to wander remains beneath the surface of its actions.

However, undeath and the sapping of magical energy left traces on its psyche; the Green Eater longs for power, and it is here that its short and long-term goals align. The creature believes that if it's able to consume enough magical energy, especially the evergreen magic it once knew, it can regain control over its fate.

FLAWS

The Green Eater has a special weakness for the truly innocent. The remaining shell of Benedikt recalls only its final days in the forest as the former paladin slowly starved to death. It does not—and likely will not—remember, but Benedikt had a younger sister he was fond of. Sasha took up her brother's sword after he had gone to continue her brother's work.

RING OF MOUNT SUMMONING

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

A pale grey ring carved from an elk's antlers.

While wearing this ring, you gain the ability to summon a mount once per day. When you summon the mount, it appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet. The mount remains for 8 hours, until it dies, or until you dismiss it as an action. The mount uses the stat block of an elk (MM, p 322) with these changes: it is a plant instead of a beast, it has an Intelligence of 6, and it understands Sylvan but can't speak. While attuned to the ring and within 1 mile of the mount, you can communicate with it telepathically.

THE GREEN EATER

Medium undead (plant), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 122 (15d10 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 8 (-1) | 18 (+4) | 7 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 15 (+2) |

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +7, Stealth +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

False Appearance. When the Green Eater remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an armored corpse covered in vines.

Regeneration. The Green Eater regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Ring of Mount Summoning. The Green Eater wears this magical ring carved from the antlers of an elk. The ring allows the Green Eater to magically summon a mount, which appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of the Green Eater. The mount remains for 8 hours, until it dies, or the Green Eater dismisses it as an action. The mount uses the stat block of an elk (MM, p 322) with these changes: it is a plant instead of a beast, it has an Intelligence of 6, and it understand Sylvan but can't speak. While attuned to the ring and within 1 mile of the mount, the Green Eater can communicate with it telepathically.

Spellcasting. The Green Eater is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *ensnaring strike*, *thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite*, *misty step*

3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite*, *elemental weapon*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Green Eater makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Blighting Smite. The Green Eater extends its hand toward any creature it can see within 30 feet. Necromantic energy washes over the creature, draining moisture and vitality from it. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. The target takes 22 (5d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half

as much damage on a successful one. The Green Eater cannot affect other undead or constructs with this effect.

If the Green Eater targets a plant creature or a magical plant, it makes the saving throw with disadvantage, and the spell deals maximum damage to it.

If the Green Eater targets a nonmagical plant that isn't a creature, such as a tree or a shrub, it doesn't make a saving throw; it simply withers and dies.

REACTIONS

Vengeful Vine. If the Green Eater is damaged by a creature it can see within 60 feet, it can point its finger and surround the attacker in a writing mass of thorny vines. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be restrained by the magical vines until the end of the Green Eater's next turn. It takes 2d6 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A Large or larger creature has advantage on the saving throw.

A creature restrained by the vines or one that can touch the creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check. On a success, the target is freed.

GRUUND, THE TATTERED ONE

By: Mike Nagle

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Denied a worthy or honorable death, the Tattered One seeks to gain his own revenge on those that caused his early demise.

BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, in a far-off land, Gruund was a mighty warrior. He felled all in his path and was an almost unstoppable force of rage and destruction. Acting as the vanguard for his lord, Gruund brought civilizations to their knees and plundered cities across the world. No mortal could best Gruund in combat. By the customs of his homeland, Gruund would earn his way into the halls of his forefathers upon his death for leading a noble, warrior's life.

However, in the dead of night, while warring in a far-off land, foul deeds were set in place. The armies of Gruund's homeland were on a mighty crusade to push back their rival neighbors and had set camp to rest. Assassins made their way in under cover of dark. Sent by a rival warrior in the camp, the assassins murdered Gruund in his bed, while he slept.

The next day, his body was buried haphazardly behind a small hill and the army moved on. Two nights later the sightings began. Scouts on the edge of camp claimed to have seen a ghostly specter moving through the treeline. A pale figure covered in what looked like a tattered burial shroud stalked any patrol that left the camp. Over time, more and more warriors went missing or were found dead in their beds.

Only when consulting the sages, did the camp followers learn the truth. Denied the worthy afterlife he had earned, Gruund's spirit was condemned to wander the world, searching for those who had wronged him to deliver his vengeance.



CURRENT MOTIVES

Gruund, the Tattered One, only seeks justice for what was done to him and to see his revenge brought through to its conclusion.

The Tattered One, or one of his lesser forms, can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Monstrous Foe.** Adventurers may encounter The Tattered One while moving through graveyards or even when stumbling upon a roadside grave.

- **A Target.** Through any number of circumstances, adventurers may be called upon to eliminate the Tattered One who could be hunting the party's benefactor.
- **A Secret Benefactor.** The Tattered One may try to hire the players to do their work for them.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Gruund, the Tattered One only has one singular motive, to gain back his honor and make his way to the afterlife by seeking revenge on the one who denied him a worthy death.

FLAWS

Due to The Tattered One's inability to move on, he finds himself hellbent on finding "justice" in any way possible. He's become caught in a never-ending quest to hunt down and kill any who were connected to the one who wronged him at the end of his life.

GRUUND, THE TATTERED ONE

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 127 (17d10 + 34)

Speed 0 ft., 40 ft. (hover)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 19 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 9 (+0) |

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Rejuvenation. While Gruund's remains are still in his grave, he cannot be fully restored or killed. Gruund gains a new body every 1d10 hours, with all his hit points. The new body appears within 1 mile of Gruund's grave.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, Gruund can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Gruund makes two piercing claw attacks.

Piercing Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, Gruund can pull the target up to 10 feet toward itself, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Gruund, the Tattered One has two claws. While a claw grapples a target, the claw can attack only that target.

Shadow Jump. If Gruund is in dim light or darkness, each creature of the Gruund's choice within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 34 (5d12 + 2) necrotic damage. Gruund then magically teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. It can bring one creature it's grappling, teleporting that creature to an unoccupied space it can see within 5 feet of its destination. The destination spaces of this teleportation must be in dim light or darkness.

GULLY-DUR

By: George Sutherland Howard

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Very few remember the mage who scoured the lands long ago to create an army of the undead. The battlefields have grown in, the villages rebuilt, the trees regrown. But the earth? The earth remembers. This earth remembers.

BACKGROUND

For most, The March of Ten Thousand Who Should Be Dead is a tale told to children to frighten them into picking up their toys and helping clean the dishes. It's a story of evil wizardry and a terrifying display of necromantic power that left entire villages empty of life, and there are as many versions as there are tellers. Whatever truth and history remain to it are obscured many times over by the shroud of myth.

But Gully-Dur, which sprung from the pain of the land in that necromancer's wake, is no myth. No bedtime stories are told about Gully-Dur, only hushed warnings and locked doors.

Gully-Dur lurks in the moors that retook the villages, behind the trees that grow up through rotting floors, among the shrubs sprouting from rooftops of decaying thatch. Gully-Dur is the life that springs anew from the bones that once dwelt there, bound and warped forever by the sorrow of the land itself.

Gully-Dur is memory. Gully-Dur is hurt. Gully-Dur is angry.

CURRENT MOTIVES

A creature of instinct and pain, Gully-Dur is only half-aware of the reality around it. It lashes out at intelligent creatures that it runs across, and actively hunts those who set foot in the old ruins from whence it came. Animals and plant creatures, or characters in animal form, will have an easier



time approaching Gully-Dur, who seems to take comfort in the regrowth of natural life in the area.

Gully-Dur can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Unseen Terror.** Gully-Dur may have set its malevolent sights on one or more of the characters, and now stalks them through the wild.
- **A Curse to Break.** The characters, especially druids and those concerned with the natural order, may seek to break the curse that animates Gully-Dur.
- **A Source of Information.** Gully-Dur's physical form is made of dead and living material from the area, and its thoughts and memories are similarly derived. Characters in animal form may be able to commune with the creature using a *Speak with Plants* spell, gaining useful (if garbled) knowledge about the local land.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Gully-Dur seeks solitude, alone with its own collective horror and trauma, emotions that it will always feel and never own. It only tolerates the presence of small animals. The curse that binds together its form can be permanently broken by showing it an incredibly beautiful view of the natural landscape, therefore letting it know that the growing world survives.

FLAWS

Gully-Dur hates intelligent humanoids like the necromancer responsible for the devastation that created it, and utterly despises arcane spellcasters, especially those who meddle with life and death. The presence of such a caster is enough to send it into a blind rage, stopping at nothing to grind its target into a bloody pulp.

HEART OF GULLY-DUR

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

A smooth river stone with a dark crack running across its surface, found at the center of Gully-Dur's "body" after the curse that binds the monster is broken.

While this item is on your person, you gain a +1 bonus to saving throws. Additionally, the stone's power allows you to connect with small-sized or tiny animals, granting you advantage to Wisdom (Animal Handling) ability checks.

Curse. This stone is cursed, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. Your dreams are darkened with inexplicable torment and trauma, and you exude an aura of feral fear. You have disadvantage on Charisma checks to persuade intelligent creatures that are not beasts or sway them to your cause.

If this curse is broken, the creature attuned to it suffers 1d6 psychic damage. The item then splits along the crack that mars its surface and loses all magic properties.

GULLY-DUR

Large elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 20 (+5) | 9 (-1) | 17 (+3) | 5 (-3) | 11 (+0) | 6 (-2) |

Damage Resistances necrotic

Skills Perception +4

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages --

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Wave of Pain (1/Day). At the start of a round, if Gully-Dur suffered damage in the previous round, all creatures within 60 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of Gully-Dur for 1 minute. A creature may repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Nature's Trauma. If Gully-Dur is slain, its spirit returns to the land that originally birthed it, where it reforms within seven days.

Rage of Memory. When Gully-Dur makes an attack against a spellcaster or a creature that has previously dealt magical necrotic damage to it, it makes the attack roll with advantage, and all attacks that target Gully-Dur until the start of its next turn are made with advantage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Gully-Dur makes one attack with its stony fist and one attack with its slam.

Stony Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be grappled by Gully-Dur, as the target is pulled into the boneyard that is the Gully-Dur's physical form. While grappled in this way, the target is restrained and suffers 1d4 piercing damage at the start of each of its turns. When the target suffers this damage, Gully-Dur regains an equal amount of hit points. The Gully-Dur can only grapple one living target at a time in this way. The target can free itself by succeeding on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check, made using its action.

HANN DUIG, THE OGRE-LICH

By: Ciaran O'Halloran

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

The arch-mage Gheras was destroyed on the verge of becoming a lich. Deprived of a host, his screaming soul leapt into the first vessel it could find: the corpse of Duig, his ogre lieutenant, who was slain defending his master. The resulting abomination shook into unlife as Gheras took command of the body. And so, Hann Duig, the Ogre Lich—the scourge of the mountains, the walking corpse, he-who-watches and the merchant of souls—was created. The scheming intellect of the archmage and the primal rage of the ogre are locked together through unlife and rage against the living and the good.

BACKGROUND

Gheras was born to a shopkeeper and her husband. From an early age he exhibited a flair for illusions—he would entertain customers with card tricks and sudden flames. He quickly garnered the attention of the local magic school. Approaching his parents, Hekter the Good offered to sponsor the boy's studies and guide his protege.

Gheras held a secret: his parents were cultists of Orcus. They met beneath the shop as the young boy watched the door. With an eye on the dark rituals below and the street outside, he soon understood how easily evil was hidden and the power of secrets.

Having betrayed Hekter, Gheras was expelled from the school. At the same time, his parent's shop was burnt to the ground in a suspected case of arson. In the turmoil, Gheras was never punished for his crime, and soon reappeared in charge of his parents' shop. Hidden from public knowledge, he had installed himself as leader of the cult, playing on the rumors that he had killed his parents himself.



Gheras would have been content to slowly amass power under the illusion of urbanity. But Orcus' demand for sacrifice drove the cult to ever more public abductions and murders, and when he was uncovered, he razed the neighbourhood in a display of power before fleeing to the mountains.

He quickly learned to dominate the monstrous humanoid tribes, and installed the most fearsome of them, Duig, the Ogre chieftain, as his lieutenant. Last seen over a hundred years ago, locked in his tower and protected by powerful allies, he communed with Orcus and learned the secrets of eternal un-life. A band of adventurers was enlisted to track him down before he could complete his transformation, and they nearly succeeded.

In Gheras's tower resides the Ogre-Lich. Half-blind, he lies in darkness, surrounded by filth and the

remains of slaughtered animals. Barely capable of movement and shunning the sunlight, he runs a network of mercenaries and traders in dark goods. The memories of Duig give him access to the monstrous humanoid tribes and their knowledge of dark secrets, forbidden treasures and unholy sites. No one knows the extent of his schemes, but he has been known to enlist mercenaries to fetch bizarre artifacts and buried treasures.

Hann-Duig provides a stabilizing presence among the monstrous humanoid tribes of the mountains. Worshipped by them as a demi-god, he holds their chieftains in fear and rewards them with favor. His wealth of knowledge and formidable magical powers make him respected and feared in the surrounding nations. And finally, his ability to enlist squads of loyal and disciplined mercenaries make him a very useful resource to rulers with questionable morals.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Hann Duig is driven by two powerful compulsions: that of the long-mad Gheras, questing for hidden truths, and the bestial appetite of Duig, ravaged by hunger and an urge for brutish power. He cultivates allies wherever he can and is a source of knowledge for all.

Hann Duig can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **Mercenaries.** Hann Duig can resource all kind of monstrous humanoids as combat mercenaries. Fearful of his wrath, they are always disciplined.
- **A Quest Giver.** Gheras's work is incomplete. He scans the mountains for traces of magic power and lost artifacts. He pays highly to those he sends out to track and retrieve such objects.
- **A Source of Information.** Uniquely, Hann Duig has contacts and access within every organized monstrous humanoid tribe of the mountains. He can sponsor others to meet powerful chieftains. He never accepts payment, but an oath to return the favor.

- **Contract Killer.** Hann Duig is regularly enlisted to kill targets on behalf of powerful enemies. The party may find humanoids who attack them bear his seal or contract.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Unknown to himself, Haan Duig is creating an avatar for Orcus to use to command armies of humanoids and descend from the mountain. However, it appears he is happy to act as a go-between for now. His ability to communicate between monstrous humanoid and human nations have made him an unexpected keeper of peace.

FLAWS

Hann-Duig has the appetite and urges of an ogre. His greed can cause him to be overcome by bloodlust where, in unholy rampage, he destroys everything in sight.

ORCUS DRUM

Drum (musical instrument), very rare (requires attunement)

A narrow-based conga drum with a patch of hair left on the skin.

The Orcus Drum looks like a primitive drum, adorned with tiny animal skull fetishes. The skin looks like that of a humanoid and the base is carved from some kind of bone. Playing it has no magical effects except when dead bodies are present. Using an action, the caster can create the following effects depending on how many corpses are available:

- One corpse - create a *zombie*
- Four corpses - summon 2 *ghasts*,
- Six corpses - cast *danse macabre* (XGtE)

The bodies are consumed by the use of the power.

HANN DUIG, OGRE LICH

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 175 (22d10 + 52)

Speed 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 8 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 20 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

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

Condition Immunities charmed, exhausted, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Abyssal, Deep Speech, Draconic, Goblin, Infernal, Ogre

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

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

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

Spellcasting. Hann Duig is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). Hann Duig has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

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

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

4th level (3 slots): *blight, dimension door*

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

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate, globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death, plane shift*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster, power word stun*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Turn Resistance. Hann Duig has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead. Amorphous.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Hann Duig makes two slam attacks, or one slam attack and one bite attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 5 (1d10) necrotic damage. On a successful hit, the target must succeed on a DC15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and Hann Duig can't use his bite attack on another target.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Hann Duig 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. Hann Duig regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. Hann Duig casts a cantrip.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Hann Duig fixes his gaze on one creature he can see within 10 feet of him. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Hann Duig's gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Hann Duig must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

TOWER OF GHERAS

By Ciaran O'Halloran

Map: Dyson Logos

Estimated run-time: 90 to 120 minutes

Tower of Gheras is a short lair adventure designed for five characters of 5th to 6thth level.

BACKGROUND

Worshipped and feared, Haan Duig, referred to as the mountain master, he who watches, the walking corpse, and the Ogre-Lich, holds great power over the humanoid tribes of the mountains.

Although a mage of great skill and an undead being of great power, Haan Duig's true might comes from his *Crystal Ball of Telepathy*. He demands a possession or piece of flesh from those who want information. Afterward, he can communicate with his subjects and see through their eyes. He has contacts among all the major humanoid tribes, and uses *suggestion* to distort their thinking and carry out his bidding.

The nations beyond the mountains understand his control of the tribes within. They see how he has forged alliances that keep the peace, and have it in their interest to keep him neutral in their affairs.

PLOT HOOK

There are a variety of reasons a party may seek an audience with Haan-Duig. Perhaps they are looking for information about the powerful humanoid warlords. They could be trying to gather an unconventional squad of mercenary fighters, maybe on behalf of a local lord. Or they could be seeking information about Orcus or the rite of lichdom itself.

It is unlikely anyone would want to destroy him—he is far too useful alive.

APPROACHING THE TOWER

As the party approaches the tower, read or summarize:

The mountain pass winds its way between slabs of granite. Following a shepherd's path, a stony ridge sharpens to a series of bluffs. At the crest of the highest bluff stands a featureless tower. The grey sky sinks and darkens around the tower's silhouette, the stone cylinder standing sheer between mountain peaks. From the clouds, black wings flap and a figure settles on the battlement rim.

Nesting on roof are two **Vrocks** (CR 6; MM, p 64). They keep watch for Haan-Duig and warn him of approaching travelers. From their vantage point, they see anything approaching the tower directly.

The Vrocks use telepathy on the weakest looking party member to find what they are looking for. If the response is hostile, they fly close enough to use their piercing shriek. After this, they swoop and use claw attacks before retreating to the air. They repeat this until the party retreats or they are slain.

A rudimentary search reveals tracks towards a path in a fissure between the bluffs. Crude wooden handrails support the steepest sections, making climbing the path slow but sure. When the party reach the top, read the following:

A grassy plain gently slopes up toward the tower's entrance. On the field below, plumes of smoke rise from campfires and the rattle of drums punctuates the air. A dozen campsites are scattered across the field, where all manner of humanoids are dancing, breaking bread, and conversing.

There are always 40 to 50 humanoids camped in front of the tower. These are petitioners—they have come to look for Haan-Duig's favor or guidance. Most of them are goblin, ogre, and orc **tribal shamans** or **champions**.

The humanoids are indifferent to the party's presence as they are not attacking them and share a common purpose, they can be approached.

Anyone who wants to see Haan-Duig simply needs to enter the tower and speak to him. Those who have been before say that Haan-Duig is in the basement and the entrance is sealed by magic.

AREA 1

FEATURES OF THE TOWER:

When Gheras built the tower, he appointed it with fine finishes and art objects. Since he became the Ogre-Lich, much of this has been worn by the passage of time. The tower has been used as a waiting area for the humanoids who seek his patronage and bears the marks of those visitors.

Walls. Exterior walls of the tower are exposed stone. The interior of the walls are lined with wooden paneling. Tapestries and paintings line the walls depicting aristocratic humans at leisure—hunting, riding, feasting. Low couches and tables are strewn around the rooms, many of them broken, the stuffing removed and tattered.

Light. Crude torches hang from walls and give a dim light throughout. The smoke from these lingers in the air, causing a mild irritation to the eyes.

As the party enter Area 1, read or summarize:

The double oak door is open—one of the doors seems loose on its hinges. The carpet in the entrance is worn, in places revealing the stone floor underneath. Advancing through the entrance reveals a circular corridor wrapped around the stone core of the tower. There are doors to small antechambers lining the tower's external wall, and open spaces at each end of the corridor. Snorts and sporadic bursts of rough laughter come from the western side.

1A) ANTECHAMBERS

These antechambers are used by petitioners who have been asked to stay in the tower for a lengthy period of time. They served the same function during the Wizard Gheras's time, where they were richly appointed with comfortable beds, wardrobes and desks. They are now well worn and in states of disrepair with remnants of campfires and straw

bedding strewn about and hammocks hang across the rooms.

1B) WEST CHAMBER

Five **Gnoll Pack Lords** (CR 2; MM, p 163) are surrounding a bound and blindfolded halfling. They are rolling dice and playing a version of blind man's bluff. The shaking halfling carries a plume of horse's hair with a pin in the end. After rolling, the gnolls either steer him towards a tapestry on the wall or their own rear ends. They occasionally pull a rope tight along the ground to trip or lash a whip to steer him. They laugh uproariously when he falls or collides with something.

The Gnolls have come to petition Haan-Duig. They offer him their services in return for his favor. They do not instinctively attack but defend themselves. Being treated as savage or monstrous will enrage them.

SHEPPY BORSAID - NPC

The halfling captive is a shepherd from the nearby mountains. The Gnolls ate his sheep and kidnapped him for their amusement. They intend to offer him to Haan-Duig for use as a servant. A **DC 15 Persuasion (Charisma) check** convinces them to let him go for a ransom of 100 gp or a useful magic item. They won't accept items found in the tower. Sheppy uses the statistics of a **Scout** (CR ½; MM, p 349) and is currently at half his hit point maximum (8).

1C) NORTH CHAMBER

A broken table takes up space in the center of the room. There are footprints on the surface. The external door is closed and barred from the inside. The door in the west wall has planks of wood across it nailed into its frame.

TREASURE

A search of the antechamber reveals a bag with 150 gp and two large rubies worth 50 gp each.

Two of the paintings on the walls could be rescued and sold for 100 gp each. The remaining paintings and tapestries are too damaged to be sold.

Furnishings include silver candle holders, pewter tankards, small statues and ornaments worth 100-150 gp if sold collectively.

AREA 2

As the party enter Area 2, read or summarize:

This well-appointed room is lined with low settees and tables. The warm light from the torches illuminates faces and limbs from the paintings hanging opposite. The air hangs with a musty odor.

This is a drawing room. Closer examination of the paintings reveals an element of macabre to each tapestry: a skull, a pool of blood, or a body hanging from a noose in the background.

A low table is set with crystal glasses and a decanter. It is filled with rancid wine. Low settees line the external wall.

The door to the downward stairs is barred and sealed by magic. In the center is an iron handle, crafted as the nose ring through the septum of a grinning ogre's face. This can be pulled open when the phrase "Through undeath rolls the Ogre's wrath, while wizards seek secrets lost" in Abyssal. The Vrocks and Pincher both know the phrase.

The door in the north is barred from the other side.

The door to the stairwell opens easily.

TREASURE

The crystal decanter and glasses are worth 75 gp, and each painting sells for 150 gp.

AREA 3

This area covers the stairwell and the rooms that accompany it. When the party advances to the first level stairs or the spiral staircase above, read the following.

The stairs are covered with green carpet, damp and heavy with stains. The stone encasing the stairwell is cold. With no evident light source, they lead to darkness.

3A) FIRST LEVEL ROOM

Behind this door are brooms, dustpans and buckets. Along the walls are rolled up carpets and crates containing a total of 200 torches. Hiding within is an **imp** (CR 1; MM, p 76) called Pincher. It is his job to keep the torches lit and relay communication between those in the tower. He can tell the party about the gnolls and the deranged bugbear in the basement. He tells them the Vrocks are the only ones allowed to relay the password to the basement, and does not give it up himself.

3B) SECOND LEVEL ROOM

This is Pincher's residence. He has a perch that looks like it was designed for a large bird. There is a high shelf with books for his size, written in Abyssal. The walls are covered in demonic symbols, pentagrams and summoning circles.

3C) THIRD LEVEL ROOM

The windows on this floor look out over the mountainous countryside and the humanoid camps on the field below. The room is luxurious and contains two gilded and velvet cushioned thrones in front of each window. Gheras could look out from here to command the assembled masses below. If a party member lingers here for too long, a shout goes up from the crowd. On a stand between the windows is an empty circular brace. It looks like it could be used to hold a globe or sphere.

AREA 4

As the party enter Area 4, read or summarize:

The floor at the foot of the ladder is wet with rain. Its rungs are streaked with white from the birds who nest inside this level. They flutter away when approached.

The wooden roof is strewn with debris and hunks of rotten meat. There are corpses of humanoids among the detritus and crows peck through the remains. Perched on the battlements opposite creep two vulturous creatures with stony beaks and black leather flaps beneath their wretched arms. One of them extends a thin neck and lets out a croak.

The Vrocks make telepathic contact with the party member with the lowest **Wisdom** score. They want to know why they are here. If engaged in combat, they use their Piercing Shriek and fly out of reach. The hordes below will quickly realize something is wrong and send champions to their defense.

The Vrocks will give the password to the magic door to party members they believe will be most susceptible to Haan Duig's suggestions, and most useful as his eyes and ears on the wider world. They may try to barter for their own advantage and ask a favor from the heroes in return. This will likely result in yielding a soul to them.

TREASURE

On one of the corpses is a necklace with a large fang amulet that works as an *amulet of protection*, as well as a spell scroll of *animate dead*, and a *+2 scimitar*. The Vrocks are not interested in these items but may use them to barter. At your choice, there may also be a scroll case containing a roll of parchment with the phrase used to open the door.

Hazard. The battlements are low. Anyone pushed or slammed against them must succeed a **DC12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** to avoid falling 80 feet to the ground below.

DM'S NOTE. It should not be too difficult to gain the password from the Vrocks for parties that will be useful to Haan-Duig. They will use all their cunning to avoid engaging the party directly. If one is isolated from the other and promised a return favor, it will tell the party the phrase before leaving the tower and returning to the abyss. The DM can choose what terrible favor it will call on in the future.

AREA 5

Area 5 consists of three adjoining rooms. This is the meeting place for Haan-Duig. As they descend the stairs read the following:

The stairs open into a room with bare stone walls and floor. On the wall opposite, a velvet drape hangs from a pole fastened high up the wall. In front floats a globe of flesh blinking over a huge central eyeball, flanked by two twitching stalks with smaller eyes on each end. Along the floor in front of the curtain lies a row of gold plates.

FLA'HA

Fla'ha is a **spectator** (CR 3; MM, p 30) created by Haan-Duig as the custodian of the mirror behind the curtain, his communication portal. He asks the party if they seek an audience with his master. They will be granted one if they can defeat his champions. He indicates the door next to him.

5A) THE MIRROR

Parting the curtains reveals a large rectangular glass in a silver frame. Rather than reflecting the room, only darkness can be seen beyond. Party members who keep looking slowly see a swathe of grey flesh appear in the darkness as their light source filters through to Haan-Guig. This is part of his fleshy body, the dead flesh grey in dim light. It moves slightly as he speaks. This is as much of his form as he ever reveals.

The audience proceeds according to the needs of the party. If he is displeased with them, he cuts off contact and Fla'ha attacks, supported by his

master's magic. The creatures in the adjoining room also join the fray.

Any favor or information is given in return for a pledge from the party. This may be a specific favor, or one promised in the future. They must give some of their own flesh or blood to seal the promise. Fla'ha will administer this, asking each hero to leave their bond in a separate gold plate.

5B) WAITING ROOM

This room is a well-appointed waiting room, with tables and seating for seven people. There are cabinets lined with oddities and petrified rare creatures, however, when the heroes enter, the room is completely dark. Haan-Duig sends his suitors to fight the five **Shadows** (CR ½; MM, p 269) that lurk here to earn his favor. He does this to weaken them as much as possible before granting an audience. Once they have drained their victims, Haan-Duig will be ready to speak.

Also in the room is Radalanta, a **Bugbear Chieftain** (CR 3; MM, p 33). Radalanta was sent by his tribe to gain Haan-Duig's favor. Unfortunately, the shadows found much greater pleasure in torturing him. He now thinks he is undead and has become the Master himself. He wields a morningstar with the same properties as a *Mace of Terror* (DMG, p 180). He is scared of the shadows, and every so often takes a swing at them until the whispers subside.

Radalanta's is the first voice heard by heroes who enter the room. From the darkness, he demands they prostrate themselves before him, the lord of shadow, and master of undeath. The shadows flicker and move around the room—even in darkness, the party are aware of their presence. After a few moments, Radalanta loses his nerve and commands the 'dark ones' to leave him. The heroes can decide what approach to take: engaging Radalanta, the shadows, or both. The secret door in this room leads into an empty room with a door (**Area 5C**). Behind this are the stairs that access Haan-Duig's lair below.

AREA 6

As the party enters Area 6, read or summarize:

This square room has bare stone walls and floor. The northern section of the wall has collapsed, the wall has been removed to reveal darkness behind. A door with a barred window is in the southern part of the wall. There is an inscription beneath the opening.

The opening leads to a wide tunnel dug from the earth. It branches into two wider tunnels that lead to Haan-Dug's lair itself.

6A) FALSE LIBRARY

The inscription reads "Library - Enter One at a Time" in common. When pushed, the door swings open by itself. As soon as one person enters, it slams shut, magically locking itself. It can only be opened by casting a *knock* spell, or by attacking it. The door has an **AC 15** and **50 hit points**, with resistance to piercing damage.

6B) LIBRARY

Lined with bookshelves, this library contains Gheras's extensive collection of books. Searching here for thirty minutes reveals volumes on necromancy, guides to the Abyss and its denizens, information on the Blood War, a catalogue of cults that worship Orcus, and guides to rituals to please him, and any other information the DM feels appropriate.

With a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **(Arcana) check**, a character who spends two hours searching the library can find scrolls containing the spells *bestow curse*, *clairvoyance*, *speak with dead*, *create undead*, and *planar ally*.

A **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals there is probably enough information within these volumes to research the method and materials needed to obtain lichdom, if the library can be accessed for a minimum of six months.

6C) GUARDS & SECRETS

In the southwestern corner of the room, standing on a plinth, are two **helmed horrors** (CR 4; MM, p 183). They wield glaives, which they hold crossed at the shaft. They attack anyone who enters the room that they do not recognize. Behind the plinth is a secret door in the wood paneling that lines the walls and leads to the lab.

Read or summarize:

Knuckles make a hollow knock when rapped on the wall behind the plinth. By pushing the corners gently, the panel starts to come loose. In the room beyond is a long table running nearly the entire length of the room. Shelving and drawers line the walls. There are jars, glass flasks, and tools strewn across the table. Along the shelves are bunches of herbs, desiccated animal parts, and wooden boxes.

This is Gheras's laboratory. There is not much of use—the ingredients have long since dried or rotted—but material components for some of his more powerful spells may be found. The door in the southwestern corner is made of iron and sealed with a magic lock. It is also double bolted from the inside. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Investigation) check reveals the door cannot be opened without using a code.

Above the door frame is a combination lock which releases both the bolts and the magic. It currently reads 999. The number needed to open it is 666. Only Haan-Duig himself knows the combination.

6D) THE VAULT

This contains the treasure accumulated during the archmage's life, as well as that given to him in tribute by the tribes seeking his favor. There are gems, jewels and gold here totaling 50,000 gp in value. Most importantly, in a sealed box under one of the floor stones is the lich's phylactery. To determine the remaining contents of the vault, roll on the Magic Item tables in the DMG; four times on Magic Item table D, twice on table F and once each on table G and H.

AREA 9

The smell of rotten meat lingers in this tunnel. The heat rises as the path descends down natural steps that open to a wide cavern. The ground is covered in debris and rats sniff in and out of the rubbish. Partly submerged lie folds of flabby grey skin. A head stirs and half-dead eyes scan the darkness. Wide hands clench as the creature uses its balled fists to pull its corpse-like body upright. Struggling to control its black tongue, the figure sneers and croaks a command.

“Speak.”

Waiting for response, its eyes roll and its head hangs loosely from his neck.

Haan-Duig will likely be expecting the characters. If they have fought their way to him, he will attack, having cast *mirror image* before playing his *Orcus' Drum* and *Pipes of the Sewers* in preparation. If he senses he may lose the battle, he casts *invisibility* and *planar shift* to escape to the Abyss, where he regroupes and works with his allies to hunt the heroes.

TREASURE

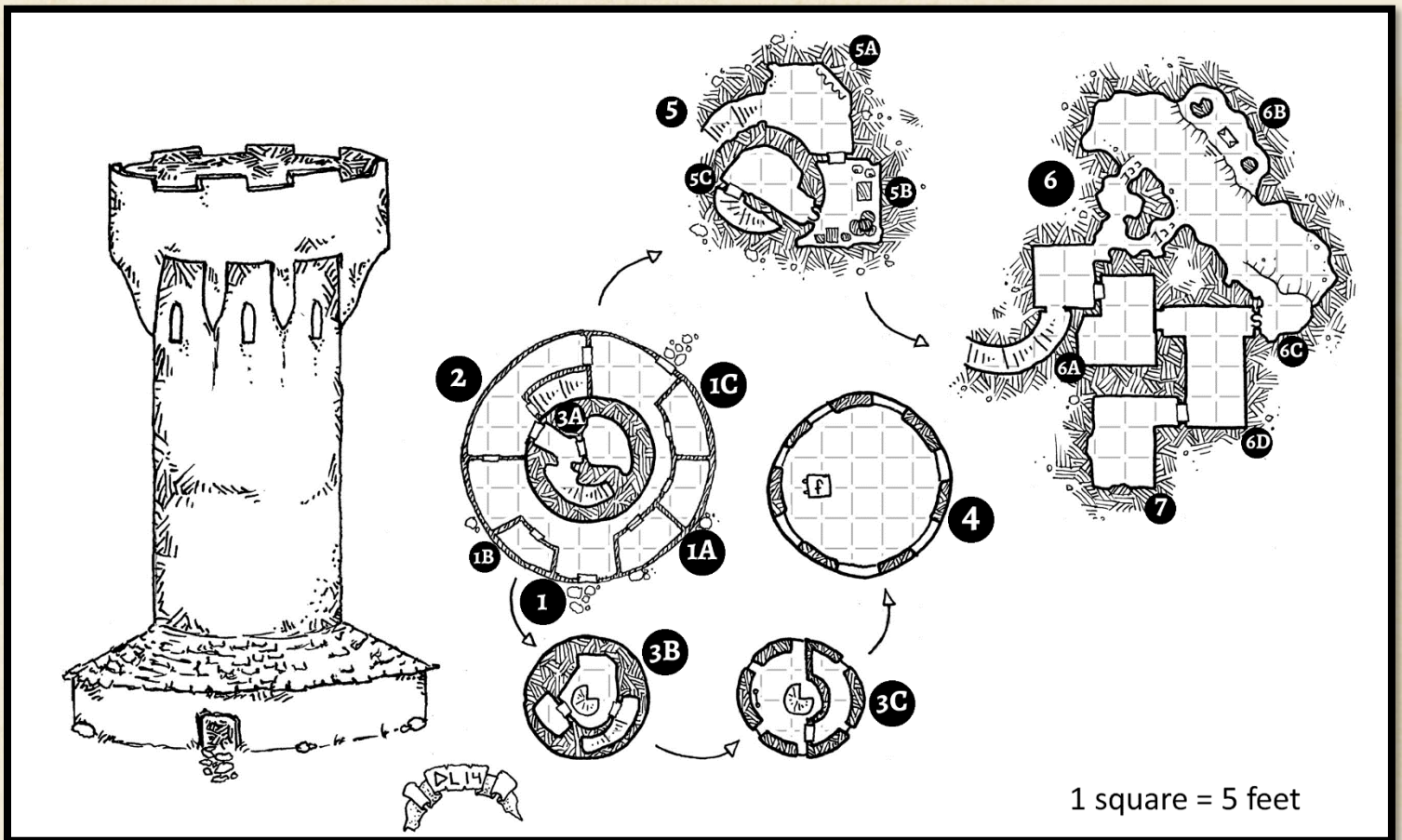
On the other side of the lair is his *Crystal Ball of Telepathy*. He uses this to control those who have given him an offering. Haan-Duig carries *Pipes of the Sewers* (DMG pg. 185) and his *Orcus' Drum*.

CONCLUSION

Killing Haan-Duig will have major and long-lasting consequences. His true power comes from the strength of allegiances he has built—throughout both human and monstrous humanoid lands. The heads of his killers would be much sought after.

Haan-Duig is a survivor and a pragmatist. He is good to his word and makes follows through on his promises. He could be an extremely useful ally in the future.

It is likely that he will be able to communicate telepathically with one or more members of the party after this encounter. Use this to the heroes' advantage, until they are put in a situation where their loyalty to him is tested. If they betray him, make sure they are perpetually looking over their shoulder—humanoids they encounter could have scrolls containing orders to kill them, for example. They should realize that he will always be watching.



HIDDEN MANTRA

By: Noah Grand

Artist: Gary Dupuis: Purple Duck Games

A yugoloth happy to infiltrate kingdoms and get information from anyone, as long as their superiors get paid for “services rendered.”

BACKGROUND

Hidden Mantra was formed as an arcanaloth’s experiment to combine a yugoloth with an ooze. Most lower yugoloths specialize in hand-to-hand combat, while imps and other devils monopolize the information brokerage of the lower planes. An ooze-like body allows for new business for yugoloths.

The arcanaloth made deals with devils, diviners, and mind flayers to learn how to infuse a blob body with intelligence and divination magic. In exchange, the newly created fiend would spy on these clients’ enemies.

After ten years of service, the young blob-like yugoloth looked for their master to ask *Did I do a good job?* But the arcanaloth was nowhere to be found—some heroes had banished him back to his home plane. All alone in a strange world, the young yugoloth panicked and dominated a member of the thieves’ guild. Now, using the humanoid moniker Hidden Mantra, the yugoloth is happy to work for praise and the knowledge that they won’t be abandoned again.

Leaders of the thieves’ guild openly welcomed Hidden Mantra. Few know they welcomed a yugoloth, and those who know don’t care. Hidden Mantra can’t carry or spend coin, so the guild gets all the profit and plausible deniability. Ironically, the yugoloth’s main moral code is to “extract fair payment for services rendered.” Half the gold up front, half on delivery of information.



CURRENT MOTIVES

Hidden Mantra delights in seeing the look on victims’ faces once they realize their secrets have been stolen. Every yugoloth wants payment of some sort—this yugoloth wants emotional payoffs instead of tangible goods. A client’s sense of giving up something dear to them to hire Hidden Mantra is more valuable than gold.

For now, Hidden Mantra is happy to keep working for the thieves’ guild. Leadership is stable enough. After being abandoned once, they value stable employment over anything that might resemble “career advancement.”

Hidden Mantra can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Spy.** Hidden Mantra may have been contracted to steal information from the party, particularly if they have achieved notoriety and a permanent base to target with divination magic.
- **A Rival.** Adventurers and Hidden Mantra could target the same person or group. The yugoloth always prioritizes information gathering and is happy to forge temporary alliances to further their ends.
- **An Informant.** When someone works for evil as often as Hidden Mantra does, they meet clients who refuse to pay when the job is done. These former clients tend to have their secrets sold to the nearest heroic adventurer!

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Hidden Mantra enjoys long-term infiltration missions. It helps the thieves' guild to have an employee with no other ties to this plane of existence. However, the yugoloth harbors deep-seated doubts about whether humanoid masters would eventually betray a fiend to save themselves when a group of heroes comes calling. If an easy opportunity presents itself, Hidden Mantra would ally itself to a fiendish master.

FLAWS

Hidden Mantra loves to admire their handiwork, lingering near the scene of their crime after getting the secrets they were hired to obtain. Even after a wizard saw Hidden Mantra's *clairvoyance* sensor and dispelled it, the obsessive yugoloth simply recast the spell. After all, humanoids never suspect that the ooze did the crime!

The yugoloth can be a shrewd interrogator, but they avoid speaking as much as possible. Humanoids tend to behave differently once they hear words coming from an ooze body!

UNIFIED MIND

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This ceramic medallion is carved to resemble a humanoid brain.

While attuned to this medallion, you are immune to the charmed and frightened condition. You are also immune to magic that can read thoughts and cannot be targeted by divination magic.

The medallion has 3 charges. While attuned to it, you may use an action and expend one of its charges to:

- Cast *calm emotions* (1 charge), using your spellcasting modifier for the spell save DC.
- Cast *sending* (1 charge).

The medallion regains all expended charges when you finish a long rest.

HIDDEN MANTRA

Medium fiend (yugoloth), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 115 (13d8 + 52)

Speed 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 19 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 19 (+4) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Wis +8, Cha +8

Skills Deception +8, Insight +8, Investigation +7, Perception +8, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Abyssal, Deep Speech, Draconic, Infernal, Thieves' Cant; telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Amorphous. Hidden Mantra can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

False Appearance. While Hidden Mantra remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an oily pool or wet rock.

Innate Spellcasting. Hidden Mantra's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- At will: *clairvoyance*, *detect thoughts*, *hold person*, *sending*
- 3/day each: *dimension door*, *dominate person*, *fear*, *hold monster*, *locate object*, *locate person*, *telekinesis*

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

Magic Weapons. Hidden Mantra's pseudopod attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Hidden Mantra makes two attacks with their pseudopods.

Pseudopod. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

IPTARENIDES, THE FORGOTTEN

By: *Elven Tower*

Artist: *Daniel Comerci*

A powerful undead figure with an unclear past who longs to retrieve its most important possession.

BACKGROUND

Iptarenides is a mysterious undead figure who spends most of his time trying to find out about his past and to unravel the secrets of his identity. Iptarenides is a lich. To some, lichdom is the pinnacle of the arcane. A feat reserved to the most powerful wizards. Iptarenides achieved this state a long time ago but he remembers nothing of this period of his existence.

He woke up one day in his library and found himself in an undead body and with arcane abilities beyond the imagination of mortals. The library was only one room within a great structure removed from the Material Plane. It sat in a small demiplane, isolated from reality.

With seemingly unlimited time, Iptarenides started to read everything in the library to find out who and what he was. Many of the tomes, he learned, were written by himself. They held the secrets for immortal life and contained detailed descriptions of rituals and magic formulae.

Before long, Iptarenides had a plausible hypothesis for what had happened. The problem was his phylactery—it was missing. He never wrote down its location. At some point during his previous life, something must have prevented him from feeding mortal souls to the phylactery. That caused him to degenerate into a demilich and forget all his memories.

Since he returned to lich form, however, it meant someone fed a soul to the phylactery recently. The phylactery remains missing and may even be in someone else's hands.



Iptarenides went to the extreme of destroying his physical body with magic to reappear next to the phylactery but something prevented that from happening. His body reformed in the place it was destroyed.

Iptarenides cannot recall his objectives or goals in the past, but he knows that his personality is different now. The person who wrote all those tomes appears to be a very different person. His past self was evil, deranged, and ruthless. Iptarenides does not identify with that description anymore. He is now on a journey of discovery.

Iptarenides owns a strange artifact, a magical orb that can store spells for use at a later time. The object is sentient and can communicate telepathically with him. At times, it appears the orb knows about Iptarenides' past but it never reveals too much. Iptarenides is suspicious of the orb but has no way to force it to reveal its secrets. His past

self stored a *wish* spell in the orb, but now he thinks it is a trap. The orb utters cryptic messages into his mind to goad him into using it but he has denied it every time.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Iptarenides has learned how to travel back to the Material Plane and has shared the runes for the teleportation circle in his lair to a few scribes and wizards.

Iptarenides can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Companion.** Iptarenides wants to experience the world he does not remember anymore. He may be willing to accompany an adventuring party into a lost temple or dungeon. Iptarenides still feels the thirst for knowledge.
- **A Savior.** Iptarenides' library features many unique books and scrolls the PCs may be looking for. Iptarenides may oppose this visit and attack the PCs or offer them a deal instead.
- **A Patron.** Iptarenides becomes more powerful as he remembers his abilities bit by bit. He is starting to hire mercenaries for odd jobs. His objective is to create a guild of mercenaries to create a small military force.
- **A Treasure Hunter.** If Iptarenides learns of a possible clue to the location of his phylactery, he hires adventurers to retrieve it. He does not go himself out of fear; if another person owns it, they may use it to control the lich himself.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Iptarenides has two long term objectives. The first one is to retrieve his phylactery. He knows that his position is weak as long as he does not know where it is or who possesses it.

His second objective is to find out about his own past. His library has no conclusive information on this subject. Iptarenides needs to cross-reference information in other libraries to find out who he was. His present name, Iptarenides, is one he chose recently. His past self was so secretive he never wrote his name in any book in the library.

FLAWS

Iptarenides fears the degenerating process that will inevitably turn his body to dust and transform him into a demilich once more. He knows his time is limited unless a new mortal soul is fed to his phylactery again. His remaining time, a lifetime for a human, is only a moment for a lich.

SECRET

Iptarenides was a powerful lich thousands of years ago. His phylactery was stolen by an enemy who placed it inside a magical container that prevented teleportation or detection. In time, the lich knew he would succumb to becoming a demilich so he made one last desperate move. With a *wish* spell, he protected his conscience and memories in his magical orb. After that, the body of the lich degenerated into oblivion. He hoped that, in the future, a soul would be fed into the phylactery and his physical body would reform. It was only a matter of time before the new lich, now called Iptarenides, used the orb and released the *wish* spell. Regardless of what he wishes for, it is a trap. The spell is designed to return the great lich's memories and conscience back to the new lich body. If this happens, Iptarenides's new memories and personality are erased and replaced.

Iptarenides

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

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

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Draconic, Abyssal, Infernal, Elvish

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. When destroyed, Iptarenides gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the place it was destroyed.

Spellcasting. The lich is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). The lich has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

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

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

4th level (3 slots): *blight, dimension door*

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

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate, globe of invulnerability*

Limited Spell Usage. Iptarenides has access to spells up to level 6. If Iptarenides regains control of his phylactery he recovers the ability to cast spells up to level 9.

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death, plane shift*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster, power word stun*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Turn Resistance. The lich has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 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.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Cantrip. The lich casts a cantrip.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). The lich uses its Paralyzing Touch.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). The lich fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the lich's gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of the lich must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ORB OF REMEMBRANCE

Wondrous Item (orb), unique (requires attunement)

A dark crystal orb that appears to hold the night sky inside.

The user gains a +1 to spell attack and damage rolls when the *orb of remembrance* is their spell focus. The orb can store one spell of any level at a time. To store a spell, the caster must spend the spell slot. To cast a spell stored in the orb, the caster must spend an action.

The orb currently stores a trap version of the *wish* spell as detailed in the "Secret" section.

IPTARENIDES'S TOWER

Map: *Elven Tower*

Iptarenides's Tower is a short lair adventure designed for five characters of 7th level. Scaling instructions are included to run the adventure for characters from 5th to 9th level.

BACKGROUND

Iptarenides used to be a powerful undead overlord eons ago. At some point, he lost his phylactery and, without a way to feed it souls, he succumbed into a demilich state for a large period of time. One day, whoever owned the phylactery fed it a soul and Iptarenides came back to himself. He has limited power and time to find out where the phylactery is (more info about this in the Iptarenides entry).

Iptarenides's Tower is located in a demiplane. The only means to access it is with teleportation magic or a magic portal attuned to it.

PLOT HOOKS

1) Some villagers and city folk have gone missing during the past year. Local authorities have linked the disappearances to an obscure figure known as Iptarenides. These crimes went ignored for a time, but the duke has now offered a reward of 3,000 gp because his son was kidnapped a few days ago. Adventurers of favorable reputation can accept this mission.

2) An important piece of information, a tome of knowledge, a scroll, or a magic spell, can only be found in Iptarenides' library. In their search, a reputable scholar informs the party that only the dreaded lich possesses such an object of interest. If the party is to recover such an object, they must face the lich or negotiate.

REACHING IPTARENIDES'S TOWER

The tower can only be accessed with teleportation magic or a magic portal. Such a spell or device must feature the unique runes associated with Iptarenides's demiplane. The party may obtain the rune sequence for the spell or portal from an old

library or scholar. Iptarenides has revealed this information to some scholars in the Material Plane in his search for his lost phylactery. A portal door in Sigil, the City of Doors, is a good alternative too.

Regardless of the travel method, the adventurers find themselves opening the entrance door in **Area 1**.

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. Although the tower is old and the stone shows cracks in its walls, the structure is strong and very clean. The first floor of the tower is warm, thanks to the burning braziers. The second floor is colder; the third floor even more so. Entering the third floor causes an uneasy feeling due to all the cruel and inhumane experiments that have been held there in the distant past. The top of the tower is the coldest place of all. The atmosphere is heavy, and evil is palpable.

Light. Magic torches in sconces light the whole tower. They all feature *continual flame* spells.

Secret Doors. A successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals any secret doors. Checks must be rolled individually every time a player desires to look for secret entrances or traps. The check result is limited to the room or area the player is in.

AREA 1

As the party enter Area 1, read or summarize:

The power of magic has brought you to a white wooden door that leads to a lobby of sorts. To the right and left, two human-sized statues flank the room. The statues appear to be armor-clad skeletons with burning red eyes.

AREA 2

As the party enter Area 2, read or summarize:

The room features a luxurious throne flanked by two braziers by the north wall. Three lavish carpets decorate the floors in this room. It looks regal and resembles a lord's audience chamber.

A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals a secret compartment under the throne's left arm with a switch inside. The switch opens the secret door to **Area 5**.

If Iptarenides is absent, then two **wraiths** (CR 5; MM, p 302) emerge from the walls and greet the visitors with violence.

SCALING THE BATTLE

APL 5-6: Remove one **wraith**

APL 9-10: Add one **wraith**

TREASURE

Each wraith drops an emerald worth 100 gp.

AREA 3

As the party enter Area 3, read or summarize:

Two wooden tables, containing raw ingredients and kitchen utensils, line the walls of the room. Two large pig carcasses hang from the ceiling in the middle of the room.

There is nothing of value in this location.

AREA 4

As the party enter Area 4, read or summarize:

A dining table by the east side of the room and a piano across from it. The piano appears to be very old; the marble on the keys looks worn and grey.

Iptarenides has a weakness for music and plays the piano often. The door on the north wall leads to a short hallway and another door. The second door is magical and similar in properties to the entrance in **Area 1**. The only difference is that it can only be used to exit the demiplane but not enter it.

A successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals sliding marks on the floor and the location of a secret door panel. A character can slide this panel as an action. It leads to the waste shaft from **Area 9**. A successful **DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals that the erosion marks on the shaft's walls have an alchemic origin.

AREA 5

As the party enter Area 5, read or summarize:

A wooden torture table, a side table with torture implements, and two iron bar cages furnish this chamber. Five people in several stages of physical and mental torture look up from the cages; a glint of hope in their eyes.

Some of the missing townsfolk are in the cages. They are under severe mental trauma and have 4 levels of exhaustion. If the adventurers try to leave the tower after releasing any prisoner, they find out that all magic doors are deactivated, and a magical effect prevents all kinds of teleportation magic. They must face the lich before leaving.

INFINITE STAIRS

The south door leads to a magical set of descending stairs. These stairs lead nowhere as they are infinite.

TREASURE

There is a *+2 dagger* on the side table.

AREA 6

As the party enter Area 6, read or summarize:

The chamber appears to be a small museum. A large statue in the form of a stone giant dominates the room. Two glass-covered tables showcase a variety of weapons and objects. The south wall is flanked by two smaller statues identical to the ones in the lobby.

If a character breaks the glass or attempts to tamper with the table's contents, the three statues in the room start moving and attack.

A successful **DC 17 Wisdom (Perception)** check reveals a panel on the wall which hides a switch. The switch causes a section of the wall to recede and reveal a hidden passage to **Area 8**.

The large statue is an **earth elemental** (CR 5; MM, p 124), and the smaller ones are **gargoyles** (CR 4; MM, p 140).

SCALING THE BATTLE

APL 5-6: Remove one **gargoyle**

APL 9-10: Add two **gargoyles**

TREASURE

A **+1 longsword**, a **wand of fireballs**, and a **wand of magic missile** rest inside the glass cases.

AREA 7

As the party enter Area 7, read or summarize:

Bookcases from floor to ceiling cover most walls. The room appears to be 40-feet-tall. There are two reading tables with a few opened tomes on them. The air smells dusty and moldy.

Iptarenides's collection is impressive. The value of the whole library, if it could be sold, would ascend to 50,000 gp. There are all kinds of tomes in this library.

Upon opening any book in the library, the user must say the command word "*arlura*". Failing to do this activates a trap. A magical effect akin to the *animate object* spell animates 10 books which attack any visitors. Defeating the books may render some of them useless. Removing any book from the library prevents this magical effect.

Scaling the Battle

● **Levels 5-6:** Remove three **animated books**

● **Levels 9-10:** Add three **animated books**

TREASURE

The spellbooks in this library contain all the spells listed in Iptarenides's stat block.

AREA 8

As the party enter Area 8, read or summarize:

Here is a large bedroom with luxury furniture, expensive sheets, a bookcase, and a desk. The bed looks messy. The documents on the desk appear to be magical formulae and a list of material components.

When reviewing the documents on the desk, a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana)** check reveals that Iptarenides is trying to find a way to bypass teleportation-preventing magic. He is yet to be successful.

The room is not empty, two **invisible stalkers** (CR 6; MM, p 192) hide by the south corners of the room. They attack when approached.

SCALING THE BATTLE

APL 5-6: Remove one **invisible stalker**

APL 9-10: Add one **invisible stalker**

AREA 9

As the party enter Area 9, read or summarize:

This room features a torture table, an arcane device, and two tables with specialized alchemy equipment. The table bears several chemical burn marks. The floor is stained with strange colors and is eroded in places. There is a waste shaft by the northwest corner. The pungent acrid smell of the room makes your eyes water and blink.

Any creature who enters the room must make a successful **DC 14 Constitution saving throw** to avoid becoming **poisoned** for an hour from the strong chemical smell.

The table by the east wall features a complicated arrangement of laboratory equipment with an ongoing experiment. Tampering with the experiment in any way causes an explosion in the room. Creatures inside the room must make a successful **DC 17 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 12 (4d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

TREASURE

Two *potions of healing* sit on the alchemy table.

AREA 10

As the party enter Area 10, read or summarize:

The entrance to the room is on a higher level, 20-feet from the floor, and consists of a ledge that surrounds the room. Two mirrors across from each other decorate the walls.

A short set of stairs on the south side of the room descends to a pool of crystal-clear water in the middle. The water appears to move in strange ways, as if the waves on the surface fight each other.

The mirrors reflect the room but not people standing in front of them. The west mirror turns into a magic portal to **Area 11** if the command phrase "Halla Jabur" is spoken. This information is available in the library with a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check**.

The pool of water houses a **water elemental** (CR 5; MM, p 125) that attacks anyone who is not the lich. The two statues (gargoyles, CR 4; MM, p 140) on the ledge join the battle in the second turn.

SCALING THE BATTLE

APL 5-6: Remove one **gargoyle**

APL 9-10: Add one **water elemental**

AREA 11

As the party enter Area 11, read or summarize:

The vault features three wooden chests, two tables, and a burlap sack on the floor overflowing with gold coins.

A gold goblet rests on a pedestal in the middle of the room.

The golden goblet is trapped with a *glyph of warding* spell. It contains a spell glyph with a *true polymorph* spell. If a creature touches the goblet, they must make a **DC 18 Wisdom saving throw** to avoid transforming into a toad. If the creature

remains like this for an hour, the transformation becomes permanent.

TREASURE

Collectively, the room contains 2000 gp, 10 emeralds (50gp each), 5 diamonds (300gp each), a *wand of wonder*, a *+1 shortsword*, and a *staff of the magi*.

AREA 12

As the party enter Area 12, read or summarize:

A magic circle dominates the center of the room. It looks complicated and intricate and appears to be sculpted on the floor itself. A blue vapor radiates from it in intervals. Four large braziers surround the circle. To the south, a stone pedestal overlooks the ritual site. A hooded figure turns as they interrupt the ongoing magic ritual.

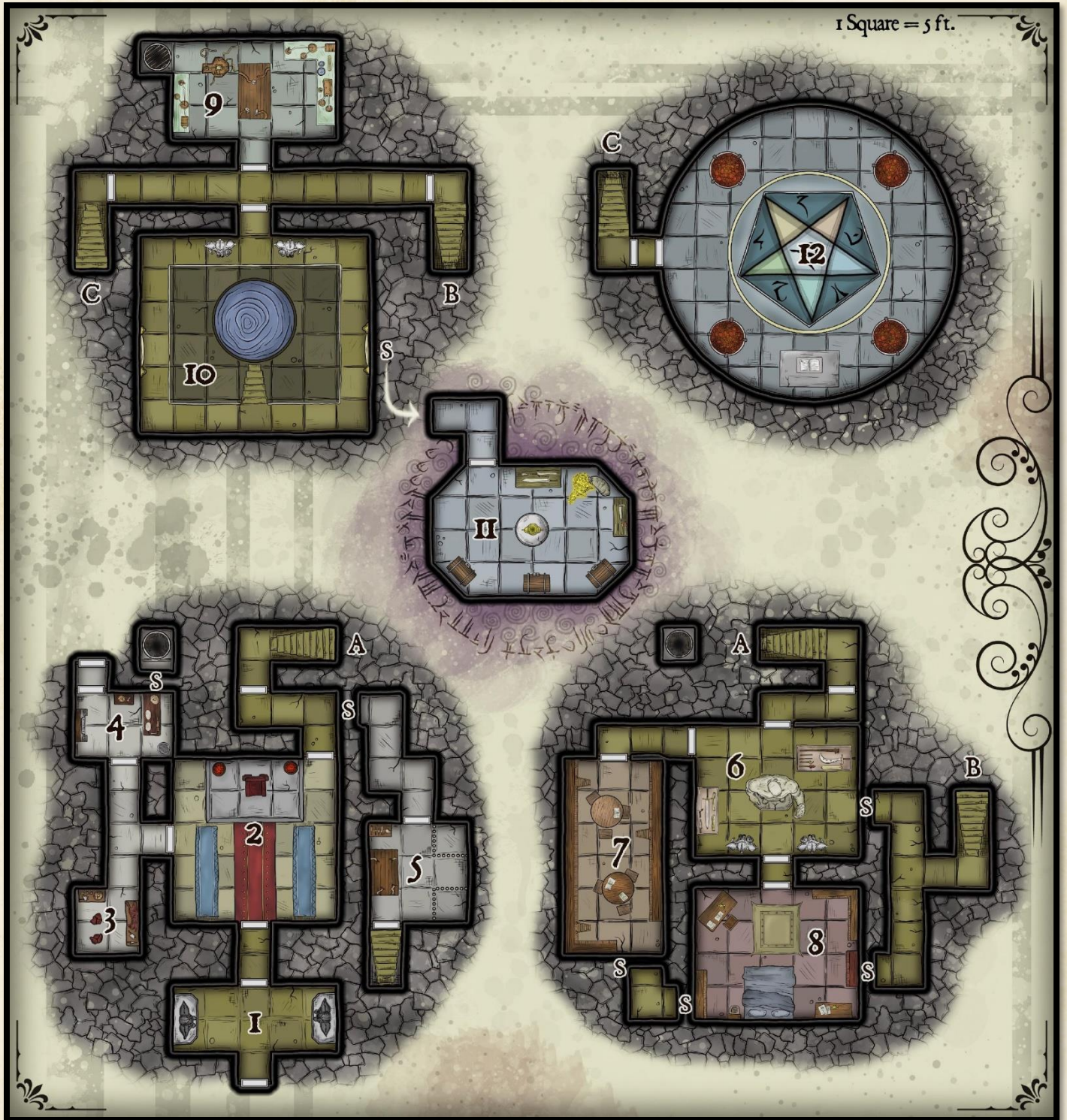
The hooded figure is the lich, Iptarenides. He is testing some theories described in the documents in **Area 8**. Iptarenides is annoyed that a group of visitors have gone through his home and perhaps taken a few things. The only way to exit the tower is by either killing the lich or negotiating with him. Iptarenides does not have the time to earn more enemies or fight and would rather agree to some terms. The lich might even offer the party to let them go if they return the favor in some other way.

Iptarenides is limited and has a few changes to his stat block. Please refer to his villain entry in this supplement.

CONCLUSION

After defeating or coming to terms with Iptarenides, the magic that prevents teleportation lifts and the party is free to use spells or the entrance door to return to their world.

IPTARENIDES'S TOWER



KIRANIL VORNISK

By: Mellanie Black

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

A revenant assassin bound by the will of a twisted lich. Kiranil Vornisk is on his thirteenth body, but neither death nor his countless mutations has hindered his deadly stealth.

BACKGROUND

In life, Kiranil Vornisk was an elite elven assassin, trusted by nobility and crime lords alike to ‘take care of business’ without too much mess, fuss or difficult questions. He prided himself on his agility, his integrity, and his devotion to his craft. He seldom asked his employer’s reasons for the hit and would take no instructions as to his methods.

Eventually, other, cheaper assassins moved in taking the reckless instruction of vengeful clients whom Kiranil had turned away. This led to messy murder scenes, lower rates, and an influx of copycat mercenaries hoping to make some gold. However, their lack of attention to detail got them caught, and drew unwanted attention to Kiranil’s profession. His clients grew skittish and his livelihood was at stake.

And so, he started The Black Knife, an assassin’s guild designed to train his inept competition, take a cut of their takings, and rebuild his tarnished reputation.

The Black Knife became renowned across continents, drawing more unusual, more prestigious, and more dangerous work. Kiranil himself took a job with a mysterious figure known only as Yxlan. Long ago, Yxlan had been a wizard, but she had extended her life to unnatural lengths by becoming a Lich.

For a time Kiranil and Yxlan had a profitable agreement, but long life made Yxlan paranoid and jealous, and when she saw that Kiranil still worked



for others, she could not abide it and murdered him herself.

Rather than granting him the peace of oblivion, the gift that he had given to thousands in his time, Yxlan raised Kiranil as her very own Revenant, sent to dispose of those who may pose a threat to her vast web of schemes and plans.

Unlike other Revenants, when Kiranil’s body fails, Yxlan gifts him another, stranger and more twisted.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Kiranil Vornisk still relishes the satisfaction of a job done and has lost none of his knack for a swift death. His primary motivation is to keep whichever body Yxlan has given him in working order so that his dignity may stay intact.

Kiranil Vornisk can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Assassin.** Kiranil is still a capable assassin. If the adventurers somehow disrupt one of Yxlan’s plans, or otherwise arouse her suspicion, Kiranil’s knives are not far away.
- **A Petitioner.** If the adventurers’ renown grows great, it may be that Kiranil petitions them in secret to free him from his ties to Yxlan. After decades in Yxlan’s

services, he seeks the peace of oblivion. Kiranil has a secret stash of valuables and magic items that he uses to reward those who aid him.

- **A Missing Legend.** The Black Knife still exists, and the disappearance of its founder is still a sore point, almost a century later. Some prominent members have heard word that a deadly assassin bearing some resemblance to Kiranil Vornisk is in the wizard Yxlan's service.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Kiranil ultimately seeks death above all else, but he'd be most satisfied to salvage some dignity or seize vengeance by taking Yxlan with him.

In what daydreams revenants may have, Kiranil harbors a secret desire to clear his name by telling the truth of his disappearance to The Black Knife. He'd use a band of assassins trained under his mark to send Yxlan and her deplorable web of plotting into oblivion. Use the **Master Thief** (VGtM, p 216) and **Assassin** (MM, p 343) stat blocks to represent members of The Black Knife.

FLAWS

Kiranil Vornisk is occasionally overcome with despair about his long string of mutilated bodies, and otherwise desperate situation. This despair can make him reckless. In those moments it doesn't matter if he is seen, or if a kill is easily traced. In this mindset he would sooner die at the brutish clubs of some small town's watch than live another moment under the thumb of a scheming manipulator.

If he is not indulging in these occasional fits of despair, Kiranil goes to the other extreme. Arrogant in his abilities beyond measure, he seldom listens to advice from those he considers beneath his level, which is everybody.

CREEP

Weapon (dagger), very rare (requires attunement)

An ornate, ebony-handled dagger. Its blade is deep black, rumored to be forged with shadow.

You gain a +2 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The dagger has 1 charge. As a bonus action, you can utter a command word and expend 1 charge to either:

- Cast the *darkness* spell, centered on yourself.
- Cast *invisibility* on yourself.

The dagger regains 1 charge daily at dawn.

POISONS

Kiranil Vornisk carries at least three of the following poisons on his person at any one time (see *DMG* p. 258 for descriptions).

Midnight Tears
Assassin's Blood
Torpor
Malice
Drow Poison

KARANIL VORNISK'S STATISTICS

Kiranil Vornisk uses the statistics of a **revenant** (CR 5; MM, p 259) with the following changes:

- **Innate Spellcasting (1/day).** Kiranil can cast the *dimension door* spell once per day, without any components. Charisma is his spellcasting ability for it.
- **Special Equipment.** Kiranil wears a *ring of protection*. While wearing the ring, he gains a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws.

He can use his *Vengeful Glare* ability against any creature, instead of only a creature against which he has sworn vengeance.

LADY DORENIA DE LUCCA

By: Anne Gregersen

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

“It is the unfortunate truth that most of my kin are so utterly pleased with their power and cleverness that they do not take the proper precautions during their nightly... escapades. They get sloppy. Make mistakes. Not I, my dear. No, I did not get to where I am today by making mistakes.

But speaking of mistakes... I am so very pleased you agreed to join me for dinner.”

Few understand the concept of camouflage as well as Lady Dorenia de Lucca. Though she doesn't skulk in the night or stalk amongst shadows like other predators of her kind, she has become an expert at concealing her vile, undead nature behind a mask of extraordinary beauty and gallant manners.

BACKGROUND

In life, Dorenia still possessed the extraordinary beauty that continue to characterize her. She was a talented dancer and singer, entrancing all who watched her perform. She lived for the attention given to her during these performances, using her beauty and charisma to manipulate her patrons into gifting her coin and fine jewelry.

But the life of an entertainer was not enough for Dorenia. She dreamt of a life at court, of ruling over people that had to scrape and bow when she approached. Her dislike for her station was obvious, and it made her personality ugly to many of those who had considered her beautiful.

One of her patrons, a elvish male named Aurelius, saw her hunger for power and grew infatuated with her persistence. He saw how she employed every dirty trick in the book to influence the few nobles who came to see her perform. How she spun them like fine yarn, seeding ideas in their minds that benefitted no one but Dorenia.



Tall and dark, Aurelia seemed like a character out of prophecy, and though Dorenia was not one to be fooled easily, even the strongest of minds can fall victim to the powers of a vampire. Dorenia remembers little from the night she was turned. Nothing except red and pain. Clawing at dark earth that was wet from rain and worms. She remembers the panic and the fear and the *hunger* most of all, as she ascended from her freshly dug grave, now made a spawn of the vampire Aurelius de Lucca.

She spent years in his service, killing who he told her to kill and sparing who he told her to spare. She was powerless against his words, as many had been before her. After many years serving the vampire Aurelius, he ordered her to feed on his own blood, thus granting Dorenia her freedom once again. Aurelius, in his arrogance, had assumed the young vampire would be grateful for the gift he had given her, that she would thank him and continue to be his loyal servant. But

Dorenia had other plans, and she wasted no time acting them out. Barely had she been given autonomy of herself again before she fell on the creature that killed her, fangs and claws piercing his flesh and tearing him into smaller and smaller pieces until only mist remained.

Since then, Dorenia has made many appearances at various courts around the realm where she attempts to curry favor with the nobility. Her lust for power and dislike of servitude has made it a sworn goal of hers to achieve dominion over others, and she's found that doing it through infiltrating the higher classes to be both an effective and increasingly entertaining endeavor. Her dream of governing over others remains as strong as ever, and her vampiric powers makes the journey towards a royal title both bloody and beautiful.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Dorenia's position at court is not particularly strong, as she has no legal claim to power through her bloodline or her name. As a result, she is very attentive to keep up appearances around the nobility especially.

Dorenia can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Ally.** Though she can be evil and cruel, Dorenia is of a much more practical mindset than most others of her kind. If presented with an offer by someone she doesn't consider a threat to her cover, she is more than willing to engage in conversation with them.
- **An Employer.** Dorenia understands that knowing the secrets of her fellows is a necessary part of the game played at court. She also understands that poking around for these secrets herself would be foolish.
- **An Informant.** As her position at court is only ever as strong as her will, Dorenia is acutely aware of what's happening among the nobility. This information might be

divulged to an attentive ear, provided that Dorenia doesn't consider them a threat...or a treat.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Dorenia's need for control stems from a unwavering fear of being powerless once again. She seeks to become a proper noble Lady, to preside over a large fief, region, or even realm if it were possible. She longs to submit others to the pain she felt at the hands of her vampire master. She knows not if Aurelius still lives, but if he does she will harness whatever power she can to hunt him down and erase him from the world.

FLAWS

Dorenia is incredibly vain and seeks to eliminate anyone who challenges her beauty. She does not take kindly to people ignoring her advances in favor of others, and beautiful, young women are known to mysteriously disappear if they reside at court for too long.

She also cannot stand to not be treated with respect. If someone looks down at her because of her station, her past, her name, or her lack of noble blood, she reacts with anger and cruelty. Likewise, if she suspects anyone has found out her vampiric nature, Dorenia will do whatever it takes to silence them.

TACTICS

Dorenia uses her spells to appear as living as possible whilst among other people. During the day, she uses the spell *mislead* to have an illusory decoy appear in the sunlight to dissuade any rumors about her state. She also uses her alluring beauty to manipulate those around her.

In combat, Dorenia does her best to overwhelm a singular foe, ideally killing them if she can. If she is ever at risk of dying, she uses *dimension door* to teleport away from the area.

LADY DORENIA DE LUCCA

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 187 (22d8 + 88)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 18 (+4) | 19 (+4) | 17 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 20 (+5) |

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +7, Cha +10

Skills Deception +10, Intimidation +10, Perception +7, Persuasion +10, Stealth +9

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Elvish, Dwarvish

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Shapechanger. Please refer to the *5th edition Monster Manual* (MM, p 297).

Aura of Beauty. A creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of Dorenia or enters the area for the first time, must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by Dorenia until the beginning of its next turn.

Legendary Resistances (3/Day). If Dorenia fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Misty Escape. When she drops to 0 hit points outside its resting place, Dorenia transforms into a cloud of mist (as in the shapechanger trait) instead of falling unconscious. While she has 0 hit points in mist form, she can't revert to her vampire form, and she must reach her resting place with 2 hours or be destroyed. Once in her resting place, she reverts to her vampire form. She is then paralyzed until she regains at least 1 hit point. After spending one hour in her resting place, she regains 1 hit point.

Regeneration. Dorenia regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If she takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn.

Spellcasting. Dorenia is a 9th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence. (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *friends*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *disguise self*, *feather fall*, *sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness*, *hold person*, *mirror image*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*

4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*

5th level (1 slot): *mislead*

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

Vampire Weaknesses. Please refer to the *5th edition Monster Manual* (MM, p 297).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Dorenia makes three attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Unarmed Strike (Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Dorenia can grapple the target (escape DC 18).

Bite (Bat or Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Dorenia, incapacitated, or restrained. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Dorenia regains hit points equal to that amount. The 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 in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a vampire spawn under Dorenia's control.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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.

Move. Dorenia moves up to her speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Unarmed Strike. Dorenia makes one unarmed strike.

Bite (Costs 2 Actions). Dorenia makes one bite attack.

LOTHO GOODBURROW

By Aaron M Lopez

Artist: Dean Spencer

Lotho GoodBurrow is an undead creature who wanders the farmlands. Once he was bent on revenge, but now he kills any he finds.

BACKGROUND

Lotho GoodBurrow spent his life outside Neverwinter on the land of Lord Alain Robinet. He was just a simple farmer who loved tilling the earth and gathering its bounty each season. He lived with his wife and two children, each of whom shared his love for the land.

To Lotho's dismay, the landowner was a cruel tyrant taking much of what Lotho's harvest barely leaving enough for him and his family to survive. On a year when Lotho could not pay his taxes due to a poor growing season, Lord Robinet dispatched a garrison of soldiers to his home where he watched with joy as his men slaughtered Lotho's family while forcing him to watch, securely bound to a tree. Lotho's heart broke as he watched his wife, and children draw their last breath, which caused his death.

Unfortunately, Lotho's anguish and anger prevented him from actually dying. Instead, he crossed into the realm of the undead where after ten years under the earth, he rose again found a pitchfork in the ruin of his farm and vowed to exact revenge on the one who killed his family.

One evening, while awaiting an opportunity to enter the lord's fortress, Lotho witnessed a clan of hill giants come from the nearby mountains and attack Robinet's castle. The soldiers of the castle were caught unprepared, and most were quickly killed or incapacitated. Following the attack, the walls of the castle lay in ruin, and the giants returned to the mountains.



With the guards eliminated and the castle virtually undefended, Lotho made his way inside where he found the lord bowing over a fallen woman. Lotho's wrath was full, and he took the pitchfork and plunged the points through the unsuspecting man. The blow was fatal, and death was instantaneous, and Lotho cried out in anguish and joy knowing that he had gained his revenge. After slaying Lord Robinet, Lotho returned to his farmstead where he hoped to be able to find peace, but instead, found that he continued to exist.

For years, Lotho remained at his farmstead, attacking only those who entered what was once his home. Occasionally he met with defeat, only to rise again one year later at his decaying home. When permanent rest did not come, he became jealous of creatures who could die and lashed out at anything that he could find. Jealousy turned to rage. Rage turned to hate. Lotho no longer believes in permanent death. He believes he is doomed to walk the earth for all eternity.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Lotho GoodBurrow has grown to detest the living and all that is good. He is drawn to the living and will thus seek them out and attack furiously with no provocation.

Lotho can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **The Unknown Killer.** Someone or some “thing” is killing random people in the countryside, and the local populace would like the party to investigate.
- **Return to Rest.** A local cleric would like to end the curse on Lotho so he can finally rest in peace. He can be laid to rest at the ruins of his farmstead, or a temple.
- **Lifting the Curse.** The son of Lord Alain Robinet has asked for help in redeeming his family from the curse which is keeping Lotho alive.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Lotho GoodBurrow has no long-term motives. He walks the land seeking to kill any living creature he encounters.

FLAWS

Because of Lotho’s hatred for the living, he blindly attacks the first creature he encounters and focuses solely on them.

PITCHFORK OF MOURNING

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Weight: 4lbs

Damage: 1d6 Piercing

Range: 20/60, Versatile 1d8

Enchanted/Cursed

Once attuned, the Pitchfork of Mourning cannot be unattuned until targeted by the *remove curse* spell.

After being thrown, the Pitchfork of Mourning returns to you at the start of your next turn, hovering “point up” within arm’s reach. You may use a free action to grab the pitchfork.

The Pitchfork of Mourning releases an audible moan when entering the presence of the living (30-foot range), giving the bearer and any near them disadvantage on stealth checks

Wail of Mourning (1/day): This wail does not affect constructs and undead. All other creatures within a 30-foot radius of the pitchfork that can hear must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 6 (2d6) psychic damage, or half as much on a successful save.

After casting *Remove Curse* upon the Pitchfork of Mourning, it becomes a +1 Pitchfork

Lotho Goodburrow

Medium undead (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 9 (-1) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Wisdom +2, Charisma +5

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Lotho can understand but cannot speak Common, Halfling

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Cunning Action. Lotho can take a bonus action on each of his turns in combat. This action can be used only to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

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

Eternal Resurrection: If Lotho is killed, he rises again in 1 year unless someone performs a ritual of consecration on his remains after his death.

ACTIONS

Pitchfork. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+2) piercing or 5 (1d8+2) piercing damage if used with two hands.

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

Wail of Mourning (1/day). Lotho releases a mournful wail from his pitchfork. This wail has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 6 (2d6) psychic damage or half as much on a success.

MELCHIOR LOGRAINE, THE DARK TEACHER

By: Kim Frandsen

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

A failed lich, who seeks to increase his power at the expense of his students.

BACKGROUND

Melchior Lograine was a powerful spellcaster a few decades ago. A well-known researcher, but also a man to be feared, as he did not suffer others to interfere in his plans, plans that spanned centuries, as he had designs on becoming immortal.

Eventually, he reached a point where he had to face his own mortality. He started working on his plans for becoming a lich, but he had to rush as he had become deathly ill. Eventually, he drank the potion, and it did not go as expected.

He had made a catastrophic mistake in his haste and something went horribly wrong. He failed to attain lichdom, lost most of his magical power as well as the ability to learn new spells or gain power, and was reduced to a unique form of wight – one which he calls a spellwight. He has retained his memories of his former life and ability to cast spells, but everything he does now requires the sacrifice of life essence harvested from others. Still, the vaunted power increase eludes him.

Now, he uses his magical knowledge to teach, drawing power-hungry students to his side and using them as much as they use him, each student trying to learn as much from Melchior as they can, before he drains them completely. Most fail to learn in time, but those who survive become his most devoted underlings.



CURRENT MOTIVES

Melchior strives towards making himself stronger, gathering and teaching students to that end, using them for resources.

The Dark Teacher can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Teacher.** Melchior is extremely intelligent and capable, and able to teach others his spells. He gathers young students to himself to teach and convert to be his servants. Those who fail make for good zombies.
- **An Undead Master.** Melchior can control an unlimited number of zombies, if they have been created by his *life drain* ability.

He is slowly building a zombie horde that can help him conquer any land or city that he needs.

- **A Researcher.** Melchior is continually experimenting with new ways to apply magic. His notes and research could be invaluable. He is particularly skilled in the arts of necromancy and enchantment and could hold some of the secrets to immortality for ambitious adventurers.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Melchior wants to climb the pinnacle of power once more and become a true lich. He recognizes that some of his power is unique, and he's determined to keep that power once he ascends again.

He has plans for a grand ritual, one that requires the sacrifice of hundreds, if not thousands of intelligent people, and he is using his graduated students – at least those still in his service – to convert more people to his cause, deluding them into thinking that he is there to save them, and grant them safe passage into the afterlife. Instead, he plans on taking their souls, and destroying them all, to finally power his ascent into lichdom.

FLAWS

Melchior is unable to learn new spells or increase his current power level. He knows and resents that fact and is always looking for ways to get around it. He is willing to do anything to fix this problem, and he becomes extremely reckless whenever such a goal is in sight.

MELCHIOR LOGRAINE, THE DARK TEACHER

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (*mage armor*)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 +30)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 11 (0) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 15 (+2) |

Saving Throws Con +6, Int +7

Skills Arcana +12, Insight +5, Perception +5

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision (60 ft.), passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic, Elven, Infernal

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

False Phylactery. Whenever Melchior uses his Life Drain ability, the hit points lost by the target is transferred to his phylactery, which can hold 75 hit point. If Melchior is destroyed while it has 25 hit points or more, he is restored in a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all his hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of his phylactery. If it has less than 25 hit points, he dies as normal.

Spellcasting. Melchior is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Unlike normal wizards, he does not need to prepare spells, instead, spending hit points from his False Phylactery to power his spells.

Cantrips: 1 hit point

1st level: 3 hit points

2nd-level: 5 hit points

3rd-level: 10 hit points

Melchior knows all the wizard spells within the *Player's Handbook* and can use any of these by expending the needed hit points.

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

ACTIONS

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack.* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit* 6 (1d6+3) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the end of their next turn.

Life Drain. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. *Hit* 6 (1d6+3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 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 Melchior's control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. Melchior has no limit on the amount of zombies under his control.

MOURNING MAGGIE

By: Sean Murphy

Artist: Bartek Blaszczyk

Mourning Maggie is known by many names. A mindful mother who warns wayward travelers of dangers ahead, or a vengeful elf spirit seeking to torment and punish those foolish enough not to flee from her crying eyes.

BACKGROUND

In life, Maggie was an ordinary eleven mother, caring for her two children in a rural fishing town. Her husband was lost to the seas when the children were quite young, and Maggie was left to raise them alone.

Growing up, Maggie told tales of their heroic father out on the seas battling sea monsters and getting into all sorts of mishaps and adventures. These stories sparked an interest for the water in the children which sadly resulted in their demise. One evening, unbeknownst to Maggie the children embarked on their own quest out to sea. All that returned was the washed-up wreckage of their stolen rowboat.

From then on, Maggie became a daily sight at the village pier, weeping for her lost children and hoping for their safe return. One day she no longer appeared. Some town folk say she died of a broken heart; others say she threw herself into the sea. But all agreed she truly died the day she lost her children.

Rumors and whispers surfaced quickly after her death: tales of a shrouded figure haunting the piers, warning sailors and children from the seas on stormy nights. Most locals saw it as an omen and heeded the warnings and few boats sailed when the mournful mother was heard weeping.

Any sailor or outsider foolish enough to ignore the cries incurred the wrath of Maggie. Their exit from the harbor was met with an unnatural screeching



wail and once the ship passed out of view it was never be seen again.

These sightings of Moaning Maggie are not restricted to the pier of this fishing village, many brave adventurers claim they've heard the howling of Mourning Maggie. Others pray to this mindful mother and ask her for protection from evil.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Maggie roams the lands seeking out wayward children and heroes alike to protect them from lurking dangers. Appearing to those nearing a time of peril, she aims to stop those mischievous misadventures before they turn deadly.

Maggie can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Warning.** DM's can use Mourning Maggie to scare fledgling adventures away from areas within the campaign they feel is too dangerous for them to go just yet.

- **A Test.** Maggie is non-aggressive to those she appears in front of, gently sobbing in her attempt to prevent misfortune. If her warnings are ignored her sobbing grows louder and eventually turns to screams, as she unleashes her wail and attacks the party. The DM can scale Maggie's AC and HP to truly test the adventurers.
- **A Side Quest.** Returning the remains of Maggie's lost children to her final resting place could be asked of the adventurers. Doing so would appease her spirit and she could rest.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Maggie's long-term motives are to be reunited with her children, which the PCs can achieve by completing the side quest of finding the children's remains. Barring this, Maggie's soul continues to roam the realm warning of impending doom.

FLAWS

Mourning Maggie does not attack smaller humanoids. Her wail and horrifying visage still affect these characters, but she does not actively harm them with her corrupting touch. Some believe this is Maggie's remaining maternal instinct kicking in.

Mourning Maggie has a fear of water and the sea. She does not pursue any creatures over a body of water and flees if attacked with any water-based magic.

A MOTHERS LOVE

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This magic ring warns you of danger. While wearing and attuned to this ring, you have advantage on initiative rolls once per long rest. In addition, you can't be surprised. The ring magically awakens you if you are sleeping naturally when combat begins.

Curse: Like Maggie you now bear the weight of a mother's love and can no longer attack creatures smaller than you. If you do, you take 1d4 psychic damage on each successful attack.

MOURNING MAGGIE

Medium undead, Chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 58 (13d8)

Speed 40 ft. (hover), walk 0 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 (-5) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 11 (+0) | 17 (+3) |

Saving Throws Wis +2, Cha +5

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lighting, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical items.

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Detect Life. The banshee can magically sense the presence of creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't undead or constructs. She knows the general direction they're in but not their exact locations.

Incorporeal Movement. The banshee can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Corrupting Touch. *Melee Spell attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 12 (3d6 + 2) necrotic damage.

Horrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of Maggie that can see her must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throws at the end of its turn, with disadvantage if Maggie is within line of sight, ending the effect itself on a success. If the saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the Maggie's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours.

Wail (1/Day). Maggie releases a mournful wail, provided she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on constructs or undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

THE MURMURO

By: Cameron Ackerson
Artist: Bartek Blaszczec

Claudia, once a beautiful and compassionate woman, is now cursed with undeath. She does not wish to harm others – aside from gaining retribution on her husband.

BACKGROUND

Claudia Susurro served as a nurse in the war that nearly sundered her city state. She had a true passion for others and was deemed a talented and worthy healer. It was during this time she met her husband, Commander Timothy Hastings, a stalwart soldier, injured in the line of duty. His life was considered over after receiving a near-fatal wound during a battle; however, Claudia did not give up on him. After several arduous weeks of fighting for his life, Timothy survived and felt forever indebted to Claudia. The young couple quickly fell in love and were married.

The newlywed, Claudia Hastings, soon became a woman of finer things. Little did she know, Timothy was the son of a high-ranking political figure in a nearby town. After the war, Timothy entered his hat into the political ring and gradually rose through the ranks to the city state's Baron. Unfortunately, Timothy fell into the same bureaucratic footsteps as his father, becoming more concerned with profits than the welfare of the people—leaving hundreds of people to struggle and starve.

Claudia remained by his side. She always held on to the memory of the man she fell in love with, but the two fell into separate existences. The growing separation was exacerbated by Claudia's inability to bear children. All her life she yearned to be a mother, but after surviving a strange fever subsequent to the war, she was left unable to conceive. People speculated the fever was caused from her constantly being surrounded by death and decay during the war, but she only knew she was happy to be alive.



The fever resulted in the Baron pulling further away from her and he sought comfort in the arms of others. As a result, his lineage continued, but not with Claudia—their relationship a mere skeleton of what it once was.

Since Claudia was wed to the lead official of her city-state, she served as a governess. Her passion lay not in idly standing by her husband, but in teaching children. If she could not bear her own, she could still help with the rearing other others. For years and years, she taught the ill-mannered, ill-behaved children of lesser fortune within her city-state. Her husband often chastised her for routinely bringing the *filthy urchin* into his home, but she did not care.

Claudia carried on teaching the orphaned boys and girls until one day, the fever she contracted returned. She had narrowly survived the time before due to the intense treatment of her fellow nurses; this time, however, her resentful husband did not grant her the same niceties.

Claudia fell increasingly ill and without proper care, she moved on to her next life. It was the

compression of hundreds of pounds of earth and the taste of dirt that she awoke to, now a servant of undeath—doomed to forever seeking revenge on her husband and the loving embrace of a child of her own.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Claudia holds a special, dark place in her heart for her lost husband. Seeing him for what he truly is, she wishes him to join her in the afterlife. Only then can her soul be put to rest.

Claudia can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** During her time as the Baron's wife, she stayed informed about her husband's comings and goings—including those of other prominent political figures
- **A Network Coordinator.** She closely observed the business of her husband for decades. She can grant code words for access into the local Harper's or thieves guild.
- **A Teacher.** Claudia has a gift for teaching. A character spending 8 hours studying with her gains proficiency with an herbalist kit and learns how to create a healing potion.
- **A Vengeance Seeker.** Claudia wishes to see her husband, the Baron, exposed and killed. In fear of hurting others, she does not accompany adventurers, however she does have a reward for them if they fulfill her desire—the reward is greater if they bring him back alive.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Though Claudia wishes to see her husband dead, in truth she just wants to hear the laughter of children once again. Due to her current state, she knows that this is highly unlikely, but she still holds on to hope.

Although, in undeath, she lost her ability to heal others, she still possesses some arcane abilities. She has learned to cast spells that keep people away from her final resting place which has earned her the nickname *The Murmuro*, or the one who whispers.

If there is a way for adventures to cure her or lead her to a new existence, she would be eternally grateful.

FLAWS

Claudia is a flesh-eating ghoul and she knows it. Due to this, she often scares away people who come to her cemetery, in fear of harming them. The cemetery where she resides has been deemed as cursed and it is forbidden to enter.

Here she lives alone, constantly craving to re-enter society but growing more callous and envious of the living with each passing day.

CLAUDIA “THE MUMURO”

Medium undead, chaotic good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 28 (7d8)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 13 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 7 (-2) | 10 (+0) | 15 (+2) |

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Claudia’s innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *message*, *thaumaturgy*

1/day each: *command*, *dissonant whispers*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Claudia makes two attacks, one with her bite and one with her claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage. The bite of Claudia inflicts a terrible disease, deteriorating health and agility within a day. On a successful hit, the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction can only be restored by a *lesser restoration* spell or similar effect.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a ghoul under Claudia’s control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. Claudia can have no more than 4 ghouls under her control at one time.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 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.



POLLY HALFTITCH

By: Zac Goins

Artist: Jayaraj Paul: Purple Duck Games

An undead hag just hoping to rebuild her family. Adventurers often come equipped with the best bits, though Polly isn't picky. She walks about the wildlands clothed in a black pudding.

BACKGROUND

Polly was a lower-noble who became the fixation of a local prince named Caverlen. The couple came together in secret tristes for several years, until Caverlen was set to marry a lady of higher stance and take the throne. The separation from Polly was unavoidable; however, an unexpected pregnancy complicated matters to a potentially tedious degree. Caverlen's family suspected the pregnancy was perhaps more than an accident and was instead Polly's attempt to ascend to royalty herself.

To be rid of the problem entirely, the Caverlen's family planted evidence, hired witnesses, and called Polly out as a witch, something they knew would ruin her reputation and result in banishment. Little did they know that the accusation of witchcraft bared had hit the mark.

Polly was cast out just weeks before she was to give birth and was sent to live out the rest of her days in the wildlands. Unfortunately, those days were few as she died in childbirth. Her family spent weeks looking for her to no avail. Eventually they called the search off, for fear of being branded witches themselves by the nobility.

The arcane bits she had dabbled in roared to life during her last moments, turning the witch into an undead hag. Most of her mind is gone, and what remains views reality through a warped lens. She still resides within the wildlands and has made the area even more unsafe to those who would pass through.



Those that wish to converse with Polly will find that her addled mind recalls events of the distant past with more clarity than those of the day before.

Somewhere along the way, her undead form became the host to a symbiotic relationship with a **black pudding** (CR 4; MM, p 240). The ooze coats her and is often mistaken for part of her form. Any magical illusion that she projects over her body conceals the pudding as well. The creature does not consume Polly, so long as she allows it to feast on whatever she slays. During combat, the ooze may detach from its host in order to attack combatants outright.

CURRENT MOTIVES

At the moment, Polly's singular desire is a distorted mindset of what she valued while living. Polly is always on the lookout for body parts that she can harvest to graft onto her constructed child.

Polly can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Resource.** Polly has slain many travelers. It is possible that an NPC the party is looking for can be found rotting in a pile of castoff bits along with any gear they would have been carrying.
- **A Quest Giver.** To those that have the stomach and the patience for it, Polly could offer a reward for those characters that would help her find the remaining parts for her child and help stitch it together.
- **A Villian.** Polly represents a legitimate threat to those that need to travel through the wildlands. A local sheriff or noble may offer a bounty on her head.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

In undeath Polly has a one-track mind. It is unknown what her mind will turn to once she has completed her child to her own satisfaction. It is possible the child will never be such completed; however, it is also possible that eventually her eyes will turn back to those that cast her out and she will begin hunting down Caverlen and his family.

FLAWS

Polly has a several flaws: her "child", the intensity of her desire to harvest, and her reputation.

Destroying the **flesh golem** (CR 5; MM, p 169) "child" found within her lair devastates the undead woman. She becomes more feral at that point, losing her Harvest the Bits reaction.

Assuming that her creation is still intact, she is driven by a compulsion to harvest and add to the construct. Any downed creature that she deems worthy becomes her entire focus until she has collected what is needed.

Finally, the hag has developed a dark reputation in the area and has become an increasing source of frustration for the local authorities. Caverlen himself still sits on the throne and there may come a time when he wants all memory of his discarded past erased for good.

POLLY HALFTITCH

Medium undead (hag), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 30 ft., 20 ft climb (if covered in ooze)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) |

Skills Arcana +2, Insight +4, Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Spider Climb. While clothed in the ooze, Polly has a climb speed of 20 ft and can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

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

Turn Immunity. Polly is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+4) slashing damage plus 4 (1d6) necrotic damage.

Illusory Appearance. Polly covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like she did while living. The illusion ends if she takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies.

The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the undead hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rotting flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that she is disguised.

Vomit Ichor (Recharge 5-6). Polly vomits debris and rotting intestines from her corpse, attempting to coat an adventurer. Target one creature she can see within 15 feet. That creature must succeed on a DC 13

Constitution saving throw or take 22 (5d8) poison damage and become poisoned. On a successful save, the target takes half damage and is not poisoned. The target can repeat its save at the end of each of its turns.

REACTIONS

Harvest the Bits. *If a creature drops to 0 hit points, Polly can move up to half her speed to the creature and make an attack roll. On a successful hit, the creature fails a death save and Polly removes an appendage or extremity of the DMs choosing. On a critical hit, the creature fails two death saves. If this kills the creature, she will instead harvest the head.*

RAJUL MAYIT – “THE DEAD MAN”

By: GM Lent

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Its true name long lost to time, the horrific being known as the “Dead Man” may be dead, but it’s certainly not a man in the normal sense. The desiccated, severed head of some forgotten species of giant, Rajul Mayit brims with psychic malice.

BACKGROUND

The origins of the undead horror known as Rajul Mayit are murky; it may well be that even Mayit no longer remembers its former self. The facts as they stand are thus: The Dead Man is the severed head of a giant. Somehow – through luck, skill, or sheer force of personality, the head survived its dismemberment and has since become a powerful manipulator of psychic energy and psionics.

Baldur’s Gate has no shortage of crime lords or criminal masterminds, but Rajul Mayit is clever enough to avoid direct conflicts with its many powerful enemies. The Dead Man resides in a crumbling tower crafted to look like a colossal

hand, but the tower shifts its position daily and unpredictably. For this reason, only those specifically invited are able to easily find and enter the Dead Man’s lair, and the woe betide the uninvited guest!

CURRENT MOTIVES

Rajul Mayit has no use for wealth but recognizes and appreciates the power that wealth brings. The Dead Man’s true thirst is for psychic energy, off which it feeds.

Over the course of its long life (and unlife!) Rajul Mayit has amassed a large collection of historical texts and documents as well as myriad experiences, and it uses these resources to lure academics, magicians, and storytellers alike into its clutches. Such characters enter willingly, and most are content to trade a bit of their psychic essence to attain the knowledge they seek.

Some researchers actually seem to enjoy the slight psychic drain, and return repeatedly, sometimes inventing study needs in order to experience the visceral satisfaction they gain from having portions of their essence drained away.



Potential ways Rajul Mayit can be used in a campaign include:

- **A Source of Information.** Rajul Mayit knows a great many things, and its long memory, undeath, and experience mean that it can also view things from perspectives shorter-lived (or still-living!) creatures might not.
- **A Master Villain.** Rajul Mayit has long-boiling plans and plans within plans, and has no problem manipulating both allies and enemies as pawns in the overall scheme. As such, the Dead Man considers nothing truly its friend and nothing truly its foe; every piece has its use, and every piece has its place.
- **A Patron or Ally.** Despite its power (and arrogance), Rajul Mayit is very limited in terms of where it can travel and whom it can trust. In addition, the Dead Man knows its best course of action is to remain unknown to the Watch, the Flaming Fist, the Council of Four, the Lord's Alliance, and the various other organizations of the Baldurian underbelly. As such, Rajul Mayit finds itself in need of less attention-grabbing associates, and is willing to pay good coin for those who perform well and keep the Dead Man's secrets.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Rajul Mayit maintains a colony of insectoid drones that feed off psychic energy in the citadel. These "psychic drones" remain in constant mental contact with the Dead Man and obey its every whim.

Eventually, once its drone army is large enough, Rajul Mayit intends to launch an attack upon the intelligentsia of Baldur's Gate, collecting their research and ultimately their psychic essences.

The Dead Man is still experimenting with the psychic drones and plans to begin making larger and more powerful varieties – drones that can store their victims' psychic power for Rajul Mayit to feast upon at its leisure. So far there has been one successful experiment on this front, and one Advanced Psychic Drone lives in the hive with its lesser cousins.

FLAWS

Rajul Mayit's main weakness is its insatiable curiosity; the Dead Man's hunger for knowledge is almost equal to its hunger for pure psychic energy. Rajul Mayit has a formidable intellect and is difficult to outsmart, but clever adversaries can turn the creature's fondness for knowledge – especially arcane and unusual trivia – to their advantage.

RAJUL MAYIT – “THE DEAD MAN”

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 172 (23d10 + 46)

Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 7 (-2) | 15 (+2) | 22 (+6) | 16 (+3) | 19 (+4) |

Saving Throws Int +11, Cha +9

Skills Arcana +11, Intimidation +9, Perception +8, Persuasion +9

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Awakened mind. Rajul Mayit can communicate telepathically with any creature it can see within 90 feet of it. Rajul Mayit doesn't need to share a language with the creature for it to understand its telepathic utterances, but the creature must be able to understand at least one language.

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

Probing Telepathy. If a creature communicates telepathically with Rajul Mayit, Rajul Mayit learns the creature's greatest desires if Rajul Mayit can see the creature.

Turn Resistance. Rajul Mayit has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Innate Spellcasting. Rajul Mayit's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

3/day each: *command*, *dissonant whispers*, *grease*, *identify*, *suggestion*, *unseen servant*

1/day each: *dominate monster*, *modify memory*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Rajul Mayit makes three attacks with its tentacles.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, or a creature that is grappled by **Rajul Mayit**, incapacitated, or restrained. Hit: 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 17 and must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the psychic damage taken, and **Rajul Mayit** regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. **Rajul Mayit can choose to have a humanoid slain in this manner become a psychic drone under Rajul Mayit's control.**

THE HAND OF WHISPERS

Map: Dyson Logos

The Dead Man's citadel is known as the Hand of Whispers, and is constructed to resemble an enormous, disembodied hand thrusting up from the ground.

Unless otherwise indicated, all surfaces are smooth, cut stone, doors are made of stone and swing on oiled hinges, and ceilings are 15 feet high.

The Hand of Whispers is protected at all times by a nondetection spell.

1. ENTRY

A creature that enters the Hand of Whispers uninvited is assaulted by a psychic projection of their deepest fear. The target must make a **DC 16 Wisdom saving throw**. On a failed save, the target becomes frightened for 1 minute. At the end of each of the target's turns before the effect ends, the target must succeed on a **DC 16 Wisdom saving throw** or take 6d10 psychic damage. On a successful save, the effect ends.

2. STORAGE

This room was once used as an armory but is now empty.

3., 4., 9. VERTICAL PASSAGE

In times past, a ladder mounted to the wall allowed creatures to climb from the first floor all the way up to the third. The ladder has long since been destroyed, and the openings are now covered by illusions that make the ceiling look solid. A creature who succeeds on a **DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check** or pokes an object up through the opening can tell it is an illusion, and a creature who succeeds on a **DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check** can easily climb up using the ladder's remains.

These three chambers are now home to a colony of **three giant spiders** (CR 1; *MM* p. 328) and one **phase spider** (CR 3; *MM* p. 334). The rooms are filled with webs, often containing victims of the spiders and the psychic drones (see below). The doors separating rooms 4, 5, 6, and 7 have been modified with small 12-inch-diameter holes near their tops, allowing the psychic drones to freely move between them.

5. WAITING ROOM

Characters awaiting a meeting with Rajul Mayit are instructed to await the Dead Man's pleasure in this room. Barren and windowless, the chamber contains hard wooden stools and nothing else.

There are 1d8 psychic drones hover around the ceiling of this chamber at all times, in constant mental contact with Rajul Mayit.

6. AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Benches along the walls of this room seat as many as eight Medium creatures. The walls are decorated with patterns intended to reduce the mental facilities of visitors. Any non-undead creature with an Intelligence score higher than 3 has disadvantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma checks and saving throws while within this chamber.

7. PSYCHIC DRONE HIVE

The walls and ceiling in this room are covered in thick, waxy sheets of resin that house the psychic drone colony. Any creature of Medium size or larger must squeeze to fit through or actively destroy the resin folds, treating these areas as difficult terrain.

8. DECOY TREASURY

The door to this room is psychically locked. Unlocking it requires the will of Rajul Mayit or a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 16). The

door can be broken inward by a character who succeeds on a **DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check**.

The treasury mostly contains nonmagical history tomes and ledgers detailing perfectly legal transactions with different merchants over the years.

10. ISOLATION TOWER

Rajul Mayit uses this space as a mediation chamber. The walls are covered in cabalistic, abstract scrawls and artwork, and the ceiling rises to a rounded peak over 20 feet high.

11. RAJUL MAYIT'S QUARTERS

Though it needs neither sleep nor sustenance, Rajul Mayit requires space to rest and rejuvenate itself.

A character who succeeds on a **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check** locates the lever that opens the secret door into Area 13. The lever is hidden from view entirely in a cleverly carved recess in the stone 10 feet above the chamber floor. A creature who touches the lever must succeed on a **DC 15 Charisma saving throw** or be cursed with psychic rot. The affected target is plagued by waking nightmares, can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its brain is destroyed and turns to dust. The effect lasts until removed by *remove curse* or similar magic.

12. TREASURY

The lock to this room's door can be opened by Rajul Mayit's mental command or by a character who succeeds on a **DC 18 Charisma check** while concentrating upon it (as though concentrating on a spell).

The treasury's contents are left to the Dungeon Master to determine and could include any

special documentation, coinage, quest item, or magic item necessary for the campaign. At the least, the hoard should include 2d4 art objects worth 250 gp each, 1d4 rare magic items, and one very rare magic item.

A character who removes an item from the treasury without Rajul Mayit's permission must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or contract one Long-Term Madness effect. If the save fails by 5 or more, the character also contracts one Indefinite madness effect (see *DMG* p. 260). These effects can be removed by Rajul Mayit at any time as long as the victim is within 100 feet.

13. VERTICAL PASSAGE 2

Like the other vertical passage, the old ladder that once allowed easy access to the upper levels has long since disintegrated. The DC to climb the passage is the same as the ones in Areas 3, 4, and 9. However, the surrounding walls have been coated with a thick layer of slime and any creature attempting to climb the walls has disadvantage on ability checks made to do so.

14. HOLDING CELL

Rajul Mayit sometimes uses this chamber as a prison cell, but typically it remains empty.

15. OBSERVATION CHAMBER

This topmost room serves as a convenient means to spy on the surrounding city and lands without being seen.

PSYCHIC DRONE

Tiny monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft.

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages --

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Psychic Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the psychic drone attaches to the target. While attached, the psychic drone doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the psychic drone's turns, the target loses 5 (1d4 + 3) hit points due to cognitive decay.

The psychic drone can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. It does so after it drains 10 hit points from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the psychic drone.

PSYCHIC DRONE, ADVANCED

Small monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 6 (-2) | 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 5 (-3) | 10 (+0) | 6 (-2) |

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Common but cannot speak

Challenge 1 (100 XP)

Store Psychic Essence. The advanced psychic drone can store up to its hit point maximum in psychic energy drained from its prey. This psychic energy can be transferred to another creature if that creature establishes a telepathic link with the advanced psychic drone while within 10 feet of it. The creature must concentrate (as if concentrating on a spell) in order to make the transfer and is able to transfer one hit point worth of energy every five minutes.

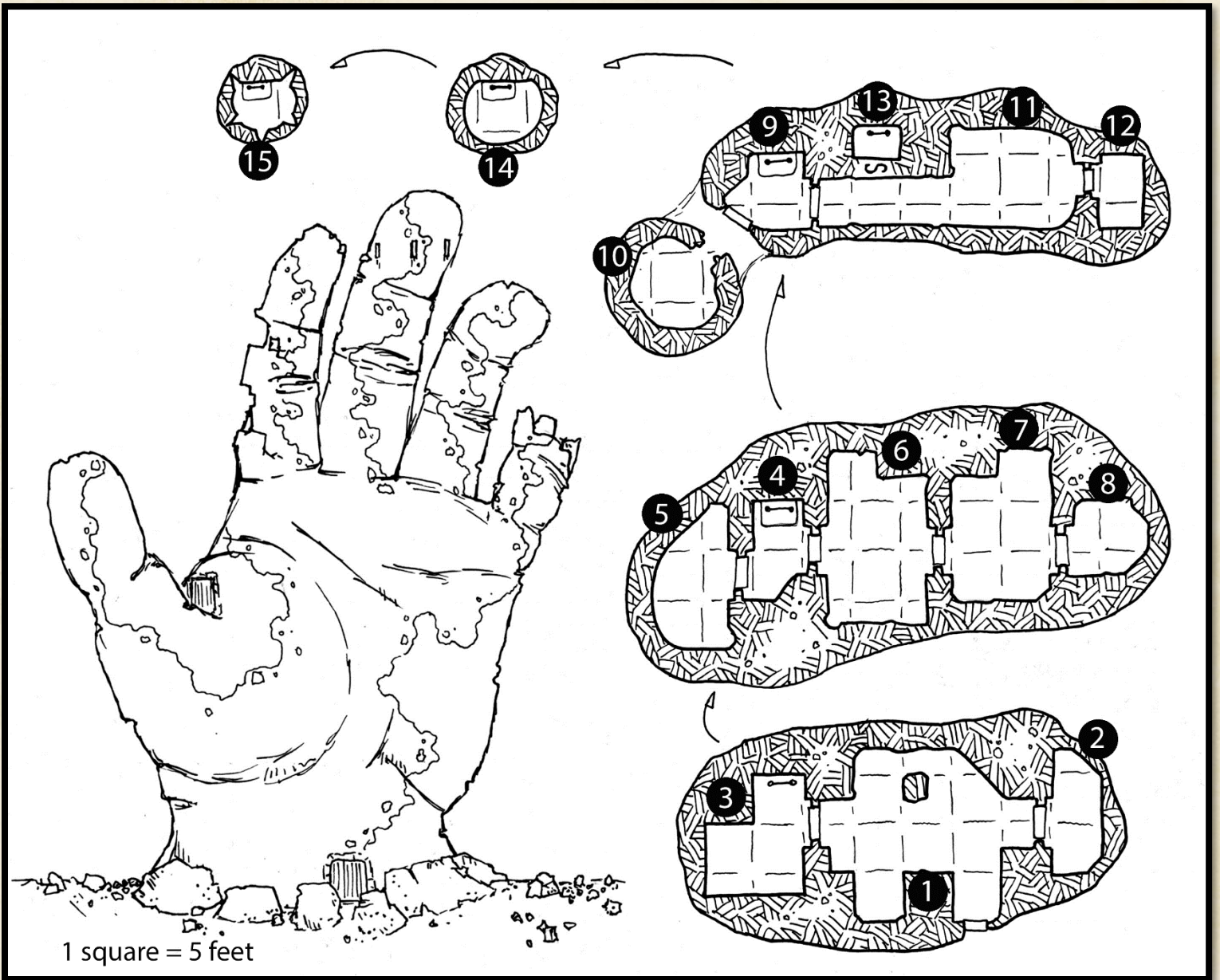
The psychic energy deteriorates quickly. After one hour, half the stored energy has dissipated and is lost, and after that 2 hit points worth of energy dissipates per hour. Regardless of the original total, any psychic energy not transferred within 24 hours is lost.

ACTIONS

Psychic Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, and the psychic drone attaches to the target. While attached, the psychic drone doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the psychic drone's turns, the target loses 7 (1d6 + 4) hit points due to cognitive decay.

The psychic drone can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. It does so after it drains 10 hit points from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the psychic drone.

THE HAND OF WHISPERS



THE RAVENOUS

By: Micah Watt

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

“Existence is pain unending... I live to consume all, even myself... I am...ravenous!”

The Ravenous is a unique nightwalker, a terrifying creature of negative energy, once undead but now no longer entirely...anything. Its connection to the Shadowfell consumes not only living creatures it encounters, but its very own life source. The Ravenous is a creature living on borrowed time, literally.

BACKGROUND

Not too long ago, the Ravenous was much like any other nightwalker, a barely sentient devourer of the living, stalking the Shadowfell for life energy to leach.

A chance encounter with a band of foolish adventurers granted it release to the prime world, and a convenient meal, until one – a cleric – sought divine intercession in the form of a summoned Planetar.

The battle was brief and brutal, with the Ravenous devouring the angel. Alas this commenced a form of evolution within the creature, taking on some of the traits of its celestial meal. No longer was it entirely undead, or immune to its own negative energy abilities. Immediately its aura began to consume its newly acquired life force.

However, along with the detriment came new abilities, including intelligence, and the Ravenous condensed its aura into an inert, metal-like exoskeleton. Shorter now, and far denser than before, it lost the ability to fly, but gained the abilities to communicate telepathically, detect falsehoods and – most importantly – a vastly improved intellect and cunning. Still ferociously dangerous, it tempered its destructive instincts with a detached logical perspective.



CURRENT MOTIVES

The Ravenous is newly awakened to its existence beyond a pure instinctual predator. It seeks to understand this strange evolution, and find a way to exist with a dangerously contradictory nature – that of both life and unlife.

The Ravenous seeks to find a way to protect itself from its own powers. While almost all of its abilities cause it pain and a small amount of damage, its *Finger of Doom* permanently drains its life. It does not know if the angel's stolen life force is a permanent change, or if its state is still in flux. For the first time, the Ravenous knows the fear of mortality, and will do almost anything to avoid this fate.

The Ravenous can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Strange Scholar in a Strange Place.**
The Ravenous seeks to understand its

new existence and seeks knowledge from any source it can access – as most civilized locales would not permit a nightwalker among them, the Ravenous seeks out lost vaults or libraries, or mythical oracles or auguries. The Heroes may simply encounter the Ravenous sifting through an ancient dungeon or ruin they are exploring.

- **An Employer.** The Ravenous might approach amenable heroes with an offer of employment. The heroes can enter places it cannot, or may have capabilities it lacks. It may hire the heroes to access a local city or church library, or obtain objects from merchants or criminal gangs. Anywhere the Ravenous cannot go, it will need hirelings to go in its stead.
- **A Rival.** Adventurers may find The Ravenous in competition with them for a treasure, relic, tome or scrap of a map, particularly if such an item pertains to negative energy resistance or life preservation.
- **An Enemy.** The Ravenous still desires to consume the life energy of living creatures. Even its new nature and will can't hold its baser instincts at bay forever...

LONG TERM MOTIVES

The Ravenous is still coming to terms with its new state, and its short term goals take precedence over all, as it is slowly consuming itself.

It has no plans beyond self-preservation at this time.

FLAWS

The Ravenous presents as much a risk to itself as any other creatures. While it does not fully understand its new nature, it does perceive its own mortality. For the first time in its existence it can die, and it fears death. While it reacts

poorly to direct threats, astute heroes can leverage this fear with subtle manipulation and promises of information or aid they may, even temporarily assuage its fears of the ever present spectre of mortality.

Additionally, The Ravenous still struggles with its new sense of self, and its baser, destructive instincts are still present, threatening to overwhelm its self-control. It can be goaded or tempted into attacking living creatures, and clever heroes might use this to expose the nightwalker if they so desire.

TREASURE

While the Ravenous has little use for treasure, it is very aware of the usefulness of coin. Its delves into lost crypts seeking knowledge or magic to protect itself have proven ineffective to date, but have yielded an impressive treasury of gold and jewels, which it has secreted away in several hidden caches. It can access these troves as needed to pay or reward creatures for service or information.

TACTICS

Despite the damage it suffers using its abilities, The Ravenous doesn't shrink away from combat. Quite the opposite, it relishes it, indulging its powerful destructive instincts that it normally must suppress. The Ravenous will be very cautious in using its Finger of Doom ability, knowing each use brings it closer to oblivion.

If brought to below half hit points it seeks to position itself for escape, and if brought below ¼ hit points it tries to surrender, bargaining with treasure or service to be spared. Such a surrender would be humiliating for the Ravenous, and it harbors an implacable grudge for anyone that forces an outcome. If the Ravenous ever finds a way to sufficiently protect itself from death, those that humiliated it are the first to feel its full, terrifying wrath.

THE RAVENOUS

Large undead fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 270 (22d10 + 154)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 22 (+6) | 18 (+4) | 24 (+7) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Con +13

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Annihilating Aura. The Ravenous may trigger or end its aura as a bonus action. Any creature that starts its turn within 30 feet of The Ravenous must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) necrotic damage and grant the nightwalker advantage on attack rolls against it until the start of the creature's next turn. Undead are immune to this aura, but the Ravenous is not. While the aura is active it also must save or take damage.

Divine Awareness. The Ravenous knows if it hears a lie

Life Eater. A creature reduced to 0 hit points from damage dealt by the Ravenous dies and can't be revived by any means short of a *wish* spell. If The Ravenous dies as a result of damage or hit point reduction from its own abilities it is annihilated.

Magic Weapons. The Ravenous' Necrotic Claws are considered magical for the purposes of overcoming damage resistance.

Undead Nature. The Ravenous doesn't require air, food, drink or sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Ravenous uses Necrotic Claws twice, or it uses Necrotic Claws and Finger of Doom.

Necrotic Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 15ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8 +6) slashing damage, plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. Each successful strike deals 1 point of necrotic damage to the Ravenous

Finger of Doom (Recharge 6). The Ravenous points at one creature it can see within 300 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or take 26 (4d12) necrotic damage and become frightened until the end of the nightwalker's next turn. While frightened in this way, the creature is also paralyzed. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the nightwalker's Finger of Doom for the next 24 hours. Whenever The Ravenous uses this ability its maximum hit point total is reduced by one. This reduction is *permanent*.

RUNESPEAKER

By: Zeke Gonzalez

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Once the most devoted librarian her civilization had ever known, The Runespeaker became obsessed with protecting the arcane knowledge of her people. Her obsession led her to guard that knowledge long after the destruction of her civilization and the death of her physical form.

BACKGROUND

In life, the Runespeaker was an eladrin elf named Daenys Dewstrider who was raised in an ancient civilization of great arcane prowess. However, while all her peers showed an aptitude for magic, Daenys found herself struggling to perform even the simplest cantrips.

Discouraged by her failures, she locked herself in the library and read stories of mundane heroes to comfort herself. A kindly librarian recognized her plight and gave her responsibilities at the library befitting her nonmagical talents. Once Daenys had accepted that she did not need powers to contribute to the civilization she loved, she was happy.

Daenys grew older and replaced her mentor as the chief curator of the library. Despite the fact that she was not an arcanist herself, she was the most knowledgeable of the librarians and familiar with every spell in the archives.

Soon after Daenys' promotion, a great cataclysm struck the civilization and killed everyone capable of casting spells--everyone but Daenys. Left to wander the empty streets of her home, Daenys came to find that the cataclysm left her capable of channeling the magic she had lived her entire life without.

She has since continued to devote herself to using her magic to protect the knowledge of her



RUNESPEAKER

lost people: all that she has to remember them by. In time, she came to realize that if she were to continue to protect her books at the Ancient Archives, she would need to leave behind her living body and become a lich.

Daenys protected the books within her sanctum until she was tricked by a group of greedy tomb robbers. Some were able to escape the Ancient Archives with books in tow, telling ghost stories about the evil undead creature they encountered in the ruins, dubbing her the Runespeaker. She and her minions stalk those tomb raiders, desperate to reclaim the knowledge of her people.

CURRENT MOTIVES

The Runespeaker will not be at peace until she has collected the twenty-seven missing tomes from the Ancient Archives. She utilizes the power of the *Ioun Stone of Discovery* (see sidebar), which always orbits her skull, to aid in this effort.

The Runespeaker can be used as an NPC in the following ways:

- **A Pursuer.** The adventurers have recently acquired a spellbook or tome that came from the Ancient Archives. The Runespeaker will stop at nothing to get it back.
- **A Sage.** The adventurers seek forbidden knowledge available at the Ancient Archives. If they reclaim one of the Runespeaker's missing books, she will grant them the knowledge they seek.
- **A Lawyer.** The Runespeaker is an expert wordsmith who can negotiate infernal contracts for an adventuring party that ingratiates themselves with her.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Once she has reclaimed all her tomes, the Runespeaker aims to make the Ancient Archive as inaccessible as possible by sinking it beneath the sea.

FLAWS

The Runespeaker fears the loss of her books, which is all she has left of her people. She is so petrified of damaging books that she prefers to utilize more devious and subtle methods of reclaiming them. She conjures small devils to secret away her books from thieves and uses enchantment magic to persuade tomb robbers to return her tomes. Should anyone realize how personal the value of her books is to her, it could leave her quite vulnerable.

Even when forced to use violent methods, she avoids using any magic likely to damage books held by her adversaries. She will only employ intelligent minions and insists that they do the same, which greatly limits their offensive capabilities.

LOUN STONE OF DISCOVERY

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

A pale lavender sphere marbled with veins of deep blue.

When you use an action to toss this stone into the air, the stone orbits your head at a distance of 1d3 feet and confers the its benefits to you. Thereafter, another creature must use an action to grasp or net the stone to separate it from you, either by making a successful Attack roll against AC 24 or a successful DC 24 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. You can use an action to seize and stow the stone, ending its effect.

A stone has AC 24, 10 hit points, and resistance to all damage. It is considered to be an object that is being worn while it orbits your head.

While this loun stone orbits your head, you gain the following benefits:

- You can use your reaction to cancel a spell of 4th level or lower cast by a creature you can see and targeting only you. This property of the loun stone can't be used again until the next dawn.
- This item has 7 charges. While this loun stone orbits your head, you can use an action to expend one or more charges to cast one of the following spells from it: *comprehend languages* (1 charge), *locate object* (2 charges), *clairvoyance* (3 charges), *arcane eye* (4 charges), *locate creature* (5 charges). The loun stone regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the loun stone's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the loun stone crumbles into dust and is destroyed.

THE RUNESPEAKER'S STATISTICS

The Runespeaker uses the statistics of a **trap soul variant demilich** (use the Trap Soul variant; MM, p 49) with the following changes:

- **Special Equipment.** The Runespeaker is attuned to the *loun Stone of Discovery*.

SAL'GOLLAS, THE COURIER

By: Magic Goblin

Artist: Gary Dupuis: Purple Duck Games

Sal'Gollas was once a human who sold their soul to a powerful devil for a prize. The deal wasn't in their favor, and now they must deliver and retrieve things for their hellish overlord.

BACKGROUND

Sal'Gollas has forgotten their mortal name, begrudgingly tasked with delivering whatever it is their master needs for all eternity across the Material and other planes. Sal'Gollas is constantly on the move, rarely staying in one place for long due to their devilish appearance.

Centuries have passed since the deal was brokered, and Sal'Gollas has started to be spoken of in legend and nightmarish stories. Referred to as the Courier, a devil who takes what they want and destroys what is in their way. While partly truth, Sal'Gollas does not do what they do for themselves, and would rather be dancing at the inn than stealing the heads of the fellow patrons.

The Courier delivers and retrieves items from around the world for their master, often at the behest of some mortal who also made a foolish deal. Many people, from kings to peasants, have entered into a dark contract with this infernal patron, and Sal'Gollas is the one sent to handle the specifics.

The devil appearing at one's home is often seen as the beginning of a wonderful deal with the mortal, but often ends with Sal'Gollas stuffing another severed head into their cloth sack.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Sal'Gollas seeks to complete their deliveries and rest whenever possible. Their mortal desires have not been sated by their immortal body,



and they enjoy good food, strong drink, and merry revels.

Sal'Gollas can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Repossessor.** One of the adventurers has something belonging to Sal'Gollas' master, and the powerful devil wants it back.
- **A Soul Stealer.** A friend or companion of the adventurers' made a deal, and the terms were not met in time. Sal'Gollas is sent to retrieve their soul and their head – forcefully.
- **An Unlikely Ally.** The party has come across Sal'Gollas and their master, and the courier sees them as his way out of his deal. They can offer assistance whenever they subtly can, in the hopes that their master can be defeated.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Sal’Gollas wants to be free of their contract and live the rest of their eternity in peace and revelry.

FLAWS

Sal’Gollas does not enjoy their work and does whatever they can to get out of or delay a job without angering their master. The revelries of mortals are a strong desire of theirs, and whenever possible Sal’Gollas joins in. This can be used to distract the devil, keeping their target safe a little longer.

Sal’Gollas also despises their master, and can be turned against them if offered a better deal.

SOUL SACK

Wondrous Item, very rare (requires attunement)

A dirty and old cloth sack that appears to have no other properties.

The bag drains the soul from any creature whose head is placed inside, whether severed or still attached.

While attuned to it, the wielder of the bag can attempt a grapple check to place it around a creature’s head. If successful, for every round the bag covers them, the creature takes 3d6 necrotic damage and the wielder gains 1d6 temporary hit points. If a creature dies from this damage, its soul is stored in the sack and it can only be restored to life by a true resurrection or a wish spell.

SAL’GOLLAS, THE COURIER

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 98 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 17 (+3) | 20 (+5) | 16 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) |

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +6, Cha +7

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +7, Perception +5, Stealth +9

Damage Resistances acid, cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned,

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Infernal

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Avoidance. If Sal’Gollash 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 on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails

Grappler. Sal’Gollash always fights with the magical soul sack, and has turned it into a deadly weapon. They gain advantage on attack rolls against a creature they are grappling.

Magic Resistance. Sal’Gollas has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sal’Gollas makes two attacks with their claws and one grapple attack with the Soul Sack.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) slashing damage.

Soul Sack Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage, and the target is grappled and blinded by the sack placed over their head. If a creature is grappled by the soul sack, Sal’Gollas may not make another Soul Sack attack unless they release the grapple. The target may attempt to escape the grapple as normal.

SARINOX RECNAMORACREN, THE SECOND

By: Tony Petrecca

Artist: Dean Spencer

Cartography: Dyson Logos

A powerful necromantic experiment gone horribly, horribly right.

BACKGROUND

People speak in hushed whispers of the Archmage Accertep and his mystical experiments. Such experiments, it is said, are often left to prowl the world.

In one such experiment, he aided the great dragon Sarinox Recnamoracren in her quest for eternal life, using an army of kobolds and terrible sacrifices in a dark ritual to create a dracolich. Unfortunately, the ritual was interrupted by a group of meddling adventurers, who slew a weakened, undead Sarinox. Fortunately, Accertep escaped with Sarinox's fully functional phylactery.

Recently, locals grew concerned that the old abandoned Bald Hill Tower had become occupied by a band of bugbears, allied with a young red dragon. A bounty was placed upon the dragon, and Accertep, curious to see if a young dragon could serve as a dracolich's receptacle, dispatched a band of bounty hunters to answer the poor locals' call. Posing as heroic adventurers, Marisa's Blades slew the bugbear and dragon, and the locals rejoiced, unaware of Accertep's involvement.

Accertep visited the dragon's corpse, and, with the help of several self-sacrificing, fanatical cultists, imbued it with Sarinox's essence. To his surprise, the dracolich arose from a burst of necromantic energy so powerful it raised the bugbears as well. Accertep departed, pleased.



CURRENT MOTIVES

This Sarinox came to be only six months ago. Initially grateful to the Archmage for prolonging her existence, she has since become increasingly angered that she was manifested into such a weak physical form.

Dissatisfied with her power, and her hoard, she dispatches her undead allies about the countryside to gather wealth and information, and is particularly interested in ways to make her physical form stronger.

Sarinox can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Quest Giver.** Seeking magic to enhance her form, Sarinox has recently learned of a legendary cache of *Ioun Stones* and needs adventurers to secure the stones for her. Sarinox might utilize an agent to make arrangements with unsuspecting

adventurers, or might deal with unscrupulous adventurers directly.

- **A Collector.** Should her agents learn that the PCs were in possession of items that interested her, Sarinox might seek to acquire such items, either through offers of commerce, or by luring adventurers to her lair and taking what she likes by force... Or both. Why not both? Yes, both.
- **A Villain.** Sarinox seeks wealth and power, and dispatches undead allies to raid the countryside for both. Needless to say, locals in the countryside are displeased.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Sarinox has no intention of spending eternity in this meager form. She retains much of her previous form's long-term memories, which includes knowledge of many of the greater dragons of the world. She seeks the corpse of an adult or ancient dragon so she can take a new, more powerful form.

FLAWS

Sarinox is arrogant and overconfident. She is bound to lure the wrong group of adventurers to her lair someday, which may well lead to her downfall. Of course, her phylactery, kept well hidden by Accertep, is nowhere to be found, so she'll be back...

SARINOX RECNAMORACREN, THE SECOND

Large undead (dragon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 23 (+6) | 10 (+0) | 21 (+5) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 20 (+5) |

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +4, Cha +9

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, or poisoned, exhaustion.

Senses blindsight, 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive

Perception 18

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 12 (8400 XP)

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

Innate Spellcasting. Sarinox's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Sarinox can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

1/day each: *counterspell*, *hellish rebuke*, *major image*, *shield*.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sarinox makes three attacks, one with her bite and two with her claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* Sarinox exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BALD HILL TOWER

Map: Dyson Logos

Bald Hill Tower is ancient, its origin lost to time. Rumors persist that a cult of Orcus worshippers once occupied the tower. More recently, a young red dragon and its bugbear cohorts have called the tower home.

APPROACHING THE LAIR

The tower could be placed in any hilly or forested area as suits the needs of the DM. Trackers who succeed on a **DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check** spot the tracks of large-footed bipeds (bugbears) moving toward and away from the tower's vicinity. A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** within 50 feet of the tower reveals several circular areas of matted grass around the tower. A closer **DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals the grasses to have been blown down in tight circular patterns, as if by whirlwind.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTERS

As written, a frontal assault on a prepared Bald Hill Tower is a very challenging encounter for a party of 5 level 13 pcs. DMs should adjust the number of air elementals and wights in the lair to fine tune the challenge with that in mind.

AREA 1 – TOWER TOP

The roof of the tower has been gone for ages, and the parapets crumble in places, but the upper floor is sturdy. Arrow slits provide a view of the surrounding area and **three quarters cover** for archers within.

Accertep bound an **Air Elemental Myrmidon** (CR 7; MToF, p 202) named **Russell** to the tower for a year and a day as a gift to Sarinox, and he guards the tower dutifully from its top. As payment for the service, Accertep provided Russell with two powerful items, the *Crown of Air*, and an *Elemental Lightning Bow*.

RUSSELL'S STAT BLOCK CHANGES

Russell uses the statistics of the Air Elemental Myrmidon with the following changes:

Multiattack. The myrmidon makes three flail attacks or three bow attacks.

Elemental Lightning Bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) lightning damage.

Summon Air Elementals As a bonus action, Russell can activate the Crown of Air to summon up to 3 Air Elementals per day as if he had cast *conjure elementals*. Russell cannot use this ability again until he completes a long rest.

Russell greets uninvited guests to the tower from behind an arrow slit, with an echoing yet unenthused command in common.

"Leave, now, or be doomed."

Should the order be ignored, he begins attacking with his bow, targeting the lightest armored opponent he can see with everything he's got, including his *lightning strike*. Russell hopes to kill the target and force a retreat. The thunder of the *lightning strike* makes enough noise to alert Sarinox, below.

However, Russell is inquisitive and bored. Should PCs attempt to interact without advancing, he might engage in conversation. A successful **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check** draws Russell into a friendly bit of small talk, with Russell asking about the world beyond his narrow limit, but he still will not allow anyone to approach the tower. Creatures who persist in attempting trespass are politely asked once to halt by a friendly Russell, prior to being lightning struck.

Should opponents appear at all overpowering, and certainly should an opponent somehow surprise him in his tower top, Russell uses bonus actions to summon 1-3 **Air Elementals** (CR 5; MM, p 124). The elementals target lightly armored creatures with their *Whirlwind* ability, hoping to

throw the lightly armored creatures into slower moving, heavily armored opponents.

A ladder and hole in the floor provide egress to Area 2.

AREA 2 – TOWER MAIN FLOOR

A ladder provides access from the ground to the landing eight feet above. Any door that might have once blocked the entrance has rotted off long ago. An unremarkable stone room awaits beyond, with a surprisingly sturdy, locked oak door in the southern wall. A successful **DC 15 Dexterity check with Thieves Tools** is required to pick the lock, or a successful **DC 20 Strength check** will force the door open.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals the tracks of large-footed bipeds frequently moving from the entrance to the door.

A trapdoor in the floor to the south provides egress to Area 3.

AREA 3 – TOWER BASEMENT

A ladder provides access through the trap door from area 2 to area 3. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check in the area reveals the secret door to the north. A narrow stone stairway descends behind the secret door. A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals the tracks of large-footed bipeds frequently moving along these stairs.

AREA 4 – DUNGEON ENTRANCE

Stairs from Area 3 lead to a long, large hall of roughhewn stone walls. A rocky ledge ten feet off the ground to the south provides access to a dark tunnel that leads to area 6, while an eerie red glow can be seen far to the east. A narrow stone hall leads north.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals the tracks of large-footed bipeds frequently moving from the stairs to the temple area to the east.

Prepared, **Sarinox** hides with advantage in the dark tunnel to the south. A successful **DC 23 Wisdom (Perception) check** is required to spot the dracolich hiding in the darkness, where she spies upon intruders, awaiting her moment to pounce. She hopes her spell draws intruders into the temple area so she can attack from the rear.

To the east, Sarinox has cast *major image*, projecting an image of herself upon the dais inviting intruders into the temple.

AREA 5 – DUNGEON TEMPLE

The ceiling is forty feet high in this large, ancient stone-carved chamber. Five alcoves hold archers, ten feet above the floor.

When the party enter this area, read or summarize:

A dais to the east holds a large red dragon. Behind the dragon, an altar sits before a statue of a bloated, goat-headed fiend. Similar statues flank the temple's entrance, while large black and red tapestries, depicting a wicked horned ram's head, line the rear walls.

The dragon speaks, "*Welcome, visitors, welcome! Do please come in. Come marvel at my greatness.*"

This is an illusion, a *major image* projection of Sarinox cast and controlled by Sarinox. Creatures who actively suspect the presence of an illusion must make a **successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check** to see through the illusion.

The image of Sarinox will engage in boastful conversation, hoping to draw intruders further into the temple area. The real Sarinox intends to attack from the shadows of Area 4 when the moment is right.

Five tall and lanky, large-footed **wights** (CR 3; MM, p. 300) occupy the ten-foot-high alcoves surrounding the temple. These are the

reanimated undead bugbears. They hold their weapons until Sarinox attacks, or they are attacked, and then they unleash with their bows. They leave their perches and pursue as needed.

AREA 6 – LAIR OF THE DRACOLICH

This central chamber serves as the dragon's lair and hoard. From this chamber Sarinox is mobile, able to confront intruders at either end of the temple.

Crates to the north contain furs, exotic fabrics, kegs of ale, and casks of wine. A large black and red tapestry conceals the dragon's bed of coins and treasure to the south.

TREASURE

12,550 gp, 1,800 pp, *adamantine half plate, animated shield*, and a *robe of stars*.

AREA 7 – BUGBEAR QUARTERS

These chambers are the sleeping quarters of the bugbear clan. Now used by wights, the beds smell of rot and death. The footlockers contain smelly clothes, trinkets, and some coins.

TREASURE

12 pp, 42 gp, 148 sp, 225 cp.

AREA 8 – EASTERN OFFICE

This furnished room was used by the bugbear chieftain. It contains a rotting bed, footlocker, table with stools, and a desk. A tunnel leads to a concealed exit hundreds of yards to the east.

CROWN OF AIR

Wondrous Item, very rare (requires attunement)

This mithril crown gleams with airy energy.

While wearing this crown, you can use a bonus action to cast **conjure elemental**, conjuring air elementals only. The elementals thus conjured remain for one hour, and require no concentration to control. Once you have used this function three times in a day, you cannot use it again until sunrise the following day.

ELEMENTAL LIGHTNING BOW

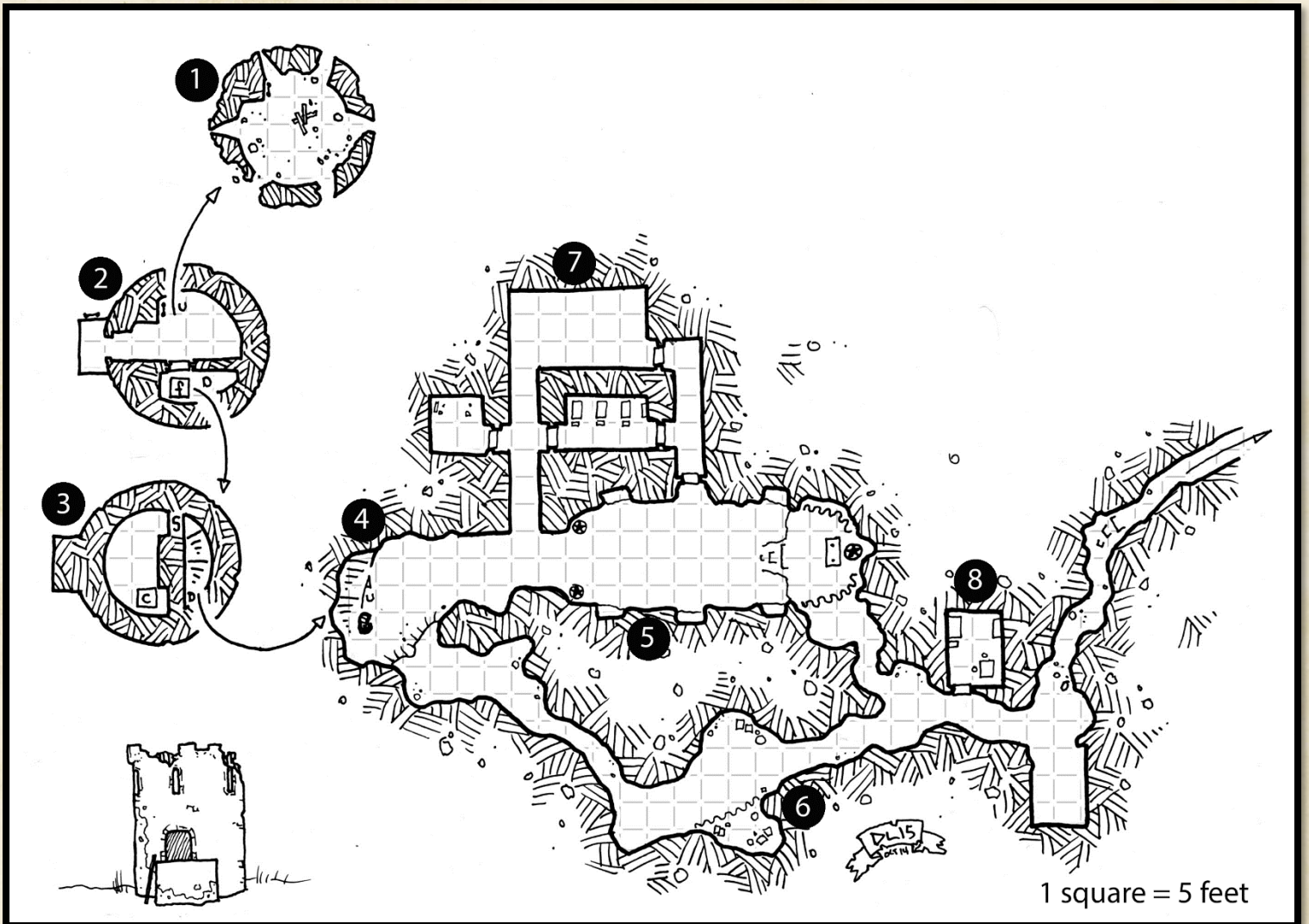
Weapon (bow), very rare (requires attunement)

This lightning shaped bow crackles with energy.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you hit with an attack using this longbow the target takes an extra 2d6 lightning damage.

BALD HILL TOWER



SCYTHE

By: Massimo Tartaro

Artist: Purple Duck Game: Gary Dupuis

The slow decadence of a man who never had anything and yet lost everything.

BACKGROUND

The real name of Scythe has been lost to time, along with his mind. He grew up a soldier, after his village was conquered by another kingdom. Scythe was ripped from his home and family to a life of war. Though young, he understood his fate and embraced it, hoping one day to come back to his family with honor and gold.

As a foreign soldier, he served as cannon fodder in many battles. He earned no home, no rewards, no satisfaction—only terrible wounds, but his dream gave him the strength to live. Sometimes, however, luck can turn. During one of his many battles, Scythe saved the life of Louis Leeford, a young noble, who in turn promoted and transferred Scythe to his manor, where Scythe worked as a bodyguard.

Louis, along with his wife and children, became a surrogate family for Scythe. In time, he felt himself responsible, useful, but mostly, appreciated. He spent months protecting the noble family while exploring a secret relationship with the noble's youngest daughter. When the noble learned of this relationship, he punished Scythe by transferring him to a giant prison where he guarded the cells of vicious cutthroats and dirty thieves.

Prisons are filled with agony, torment, and violence. Scythe's anger grew as did a desire for revenge. As a soldier and guard, he had fought, suffered, and nearly died for others. But for what? All he wanted was a bit of gratitude and love. Then, a young man who reminded Scythe of himself was imprisoned. Soon after, Scythe decided to free the young man and return to



Louis's estate to rob his gold and flee. The plan failed and Scythe returned to the prison as an inmate—jailed and tortured for life.

He suffered the worst tortures for months, losing his mind and sense of time in addition to his hands and skin. When extreme suffering, blood, and night meet, a dark creature might be formed. An otherworldly creature exploited Scythe's despair, and that night a pact was made. A **vampiric mist** (CR 3; MToF, p 246) from the Shadowfell gave Scythe the power to break his chains in return for blood to satisfy its hunger.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Scythe wanders the world raiding prisons and feeding the mist by indiscriminately killing guards and prisoners alike. Sometimes he lives in a prison for a while before moving to another one.

Scythe can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Contractor.** He's willing to spare the characters' lives if they bring him other people to kill.
- **A Target.** A high rank of the army or a noble is willing to pay the party to kill Scythe who currently resides in a local prison.
- **A Puppet.** After midnight, the vampiric mist shows itself to claim collected blood. Scythe fights to protect it, but if the mist dies, Scythe will be free from the pact and his madness could be healed. If the mist dies, Scythe loses the Vitality Pool, Life Sense, Shadow Pact, frightened immunity, darkvision, and Share the Pain traits, along with the extra necrotic damage made with his scythes.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Even through his madness, Scythe clings to his past. He is grateful to this entity, but he also feels hate and regret for what he has done. The mist is the only thing who understands him, causing Scythe internal conflict regarding his feelings toward the creature.

FLAWS

Scythe is a tormented man who is in constant conflict with himself. Whenever his vitality pool is almost empty, his alignment is chaotic, otherwise his real personality shows up and he becomes the lawful knight he once was. This changing mental status makes him unpredictable and disturbing—his voice can be heard in the prison halls he wanders, muttering illogical arguments to himself.

SCYTHE

Medium monstrosity, chaotic or lawful evil (read Flaws)

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 120 (20d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 10 (+0) | 9 (-1) |

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +5

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +3

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13,

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (5,000 XP)

Vitality Pool. Scythe can store the lifeblood of his enemies, up to a maximum of 30 points of vitality. When he deals necrotic damage, add that amount to this pool.

Life Sense. Scythe can sense the location of any creature within 60 feet of it, unless that creature's type is construct or undead.

Shadow Pact. Scythe can spend stored vitality to cast the following spells. To cast a spell he must spend a number of vitality points equal to 10 x spell level.

1st level: *cause fear, inflict wounds*

2nd level: *hold person, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level: *vampiric touch*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Scythe makes three attacks with his scythes.

Scythe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage, plus 5 (2d4) necrotic damage if Scythe has at least 1 vitality point in his Vitality Pool.

REACTIONS

Share the Pain (3/Day) As a reaction to any damage taken from a melee attack, Scythe unleashes a somber lament that afflicts the attacker. The creature suffers half of the damage it dealt as necrotic damage, the other half is stored in Scythe's vitality pool.

THE SEVENTH

By: Alan Fehr

Artist: Purple Duck Games: Gary Dupuis

A mysterious figure spoken of in hushed tones, living only to serve the Goddess Loviatar. The Seventh is an enforcer and assassin whose constant anguish is only fuel for the fervor in which she hunts her prey.

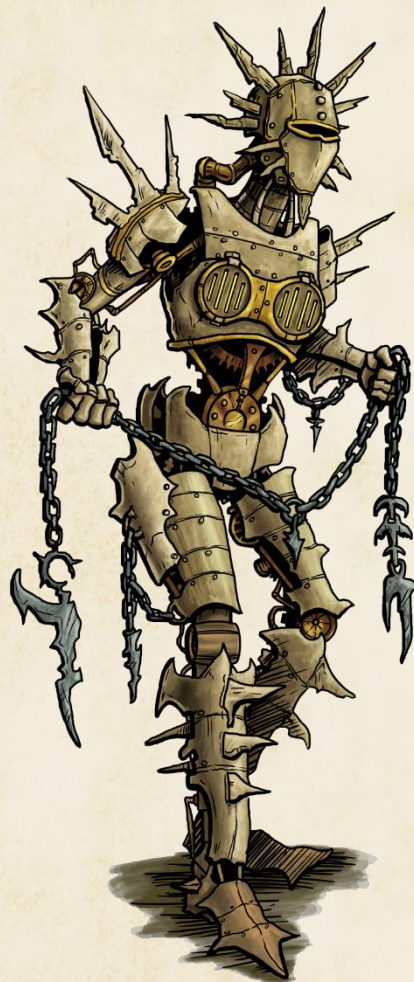
BACKGROUND

The Seventh began her journey as a member of the Cult of Loviatar, Goddess of Pain and Torture. Concealed deep in the bowels of Waterdeep, the longevity of this sect was primarily due to the brilliance and ruthlessness of its leader, a gnome artificer by the name of Lilu Soresprocket. She had a knack for both clockwork and ripping off fingernails, and used these talents to develop a unique torment that also created loyal enforcers.

Out of countless attempts, only six had been successful, and this loyal cultist would be the seventh. Or, she would cease to exist altogether.

Skin was slowly ripped and torn, replaced by sheets of steel. Molten spikes were driven straight into bone, organs were replaced by clockwork and a magical steam furnace replaced her heart. Using healing and necromantic arts both, the brain was kept alive and attached to the animated skeleton and nervous system. A complicated potion system was installed under the helmet, ensuring obedience or death, while the searing heat of the furnace caused intense, constant anguish.

However, unlike the previous six, the Seventh's mind snapped mere moments before the ritual was completed, reducing her to a gibbering, unhinged wreck. Not willing to give up when so close to success, an enchanter was enlisted to create a unique weapon. This double-edged chain whip was forcibly attuned to the Seventh



and had mind-calming effects. The experiment was a success, and the enchanter was never seen again.

The Seventh, with her new kin, formed the Council of Agonies under the guidance of Overseer Soresprocket. The Council protects the Cult from all threats, external or internal. Due to intensive martial training after their transformation, the Agonies make excellent enforcers, bodyguards, and assassins. They've also been known to seek out mercenary or bounty hunter work to fill the Cult's coffers as necessary. The Seventh, with her whip Fervor, leads with a calculating, intense zealotry.

If one was to attract the ire of any of the Council of Agonies, pray that any of the other

six respond. The Seventh shows no mercy and no quarter.

CURRENT MOTIVES

The Seventh lives to serve the Goddess Loviatar and her Cult. This includes performing necessary work as an enforcer, assassin, bodyguard, or even as a bounty-hunter or mercenary if required by the Cult.

The Seventh can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Assassin.** The Seventh may have orders to assassinate an enemy of Loviatar, which would generally be anyone easing pain and suffering. A local cleric or priest, a noble attempting to put an end to poverty, an adventurer or one of the party's allies or family.
- **A Target.** A former member of the Cult who wishes to repent realizes they've been targeted by the Council - and the Seventh has responded. This individual may reach out for bodyguards or protection from a mysterious attacker - not explaining who this attacker is, as that would mean explaining their checkered past.
- **A Quest Giver.** The adventurers find The Seventh unconscious, no weapon in sight, or they disarm The Seventh during a battle. Once separated from her weapon, between the contrasting sobbing and hysterical laughter, she explains how she came to be. She asks the party to track down Lilu Soresprocket and put an end to her experiments, as well as the rest of the Council of Agonies.
- **A Bounty Hunter.** The Seventh may be required by the Cult to take a bounty to fill the Cult's coffers. She may enlist the aid of a passing band of adventurers if the target is particularly difficult. She may, however, turn on them at the first sign of empathy or attempt to heal the

target. Or, a party member may end up with a bounty that The Seventh decides to take.

- **A Villain.** If the party discovers Cult activities or kills one of the other Council members, they may find themselves being tracked relentlessly by The Seventh. She may take a party member hostage for posturing. She may also lure them to the Cult lair and present them as new experiments for the Overseer.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

The Seventh, while attuned to her weapon, has no long-term goals but furthering the will of the Goddess Loviatar and her Cult.

While disarmed and at least 5 feet away from her weapon, The Seventh's mind snaps and possesses only the will for vengeance against the Cult and Overseer Soresprocket that turned her into this monstrosity.

FLAWS

The Seventh is a ruthless killing machine, unless she is separated from his weapon. Without the mind calming and altering effects of Fervor, she recalls the anguish by which she was turned into this abomination and turns her calculating will to the destruction of the Cult, especially the Overseer and the other six of the Council.

Once every 3 days, the steam furnace that replaced her heart must be replenished. While any water will do, opening the steel doors of her chest compartment leaves her vulnerable.

The potion-injecting system under her helmet must be replenished every month, or her brain succumbs to the heat of the furnace. A massive strike to the head may shatter one or two bottles, causing confusion and temporary blindness. Removing the helmet and the machinery results in immediate death of The Seventh.

FERVOR

Weapon (two-handed whip), very rare (requires attunement), reach (10 feet)

A whip made of an enchanted steel chain and two blades on either end. The chain signifies servitude, the whip is a symbol of Loviatar, and the asymmetrical blades are made to leave unique wounds that rip open further and cause intense pain when the blade is removed.

You gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

This weapon does increased damage (2d4) per hit, but does not use the finesse property.

As a bonus action, you may swing Fervor around and perform a second attack with the other blade.

While attuned, Fervor generates a constant *calm emotions* spell that only affects the wielder, which grants the wielder advantage on all charmed and frightened saving throws.

At dawn daily, the wielder must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, Fervor erases all memories of anything the wielder did that brought them joy on the previous day. This provides an additional +1 to attack and damage rolls for the day (max +2) but gives disadvantage on all Charisma checks.

POTION INJECTOR

This complicated clockwork device injects potions directly into The Seventh's brain. It could conceivably be used by a living humanoid but would cause a massive amount of pain when equipped and cause instant death on its removal.

If taken off The Seventh's head intact, the device contains the following potions:

Potion of Greater Healing (5)
Potion of Fire Giant Strength (3)
Potion of Vitality (3)
Oil of Etherealness (1)

THE SEVENTH

Medium construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (splint mail)

Hit Points 156 (24d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 10 (+0) |

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +5

Damage Immunities poison; piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Skills Athletics +8, Intimidation +3, Insight +3, Survival +3

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Psychic Aversion - If The Seventh takes psychic damage, she has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of her next turn.

Magic Resistance - The Seventh has advantage on all saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Pained Fury. The Seventh can cause an additional 9 (1d6 + 5) necrotic damage with her first attack each turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Seventh makes three attacks with her whip.

Fervor (Whip +1). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d4 + 7) piercing damage

Rip & Tear. The Seventh makes a melee weapon attack against a target within range. On a success, the target takes regular weapon damage and becomes wounded. The target takes 1d4 necrotic damage at the beginning of each of their turns for each wound they've sustained. This damage can only be regained through a short or long rest, rather than by magic, or any other means. The target can use an Action to make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a success, all wound effects end. Alternatively, the creature or an ally within 5 feet can use an action to make a DC16 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of wounds on a success.

Potion Injector. The Seventh can use a bonus action to activate her potion injector. One of the following effects may be chosen:

- Heal self for 20 hit points (3/day)
- Increase strength for an hour to 25, increasing STR modifier to +7. Fervor changes to +9 to hit. Hit 14 (2d4 + 9) piercing damage. (1/day)
- Grant self effects of the *etherealness* spell (1/day)

SIR WALLACE VAN HYDEN

By: Keer Ruiz

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Sir Wallace Van Hyden is a former paladin who fell victim to the twisted taste of fate. He wanders the earth, roaming, bearing with himself and his memories.

BACKGROUND

Sir Wallace Van Hyden was a well-known knight. He always led an honorable life, spreading his values everywhere he went. He was a paladin and behaved as such. Good deeds and prayers were his creed, helping others his daily task.

He wore his hair down, long black waves shining on the back of his silver-gray armor. Although he was not very bulky or hefty, he was as good a match as any well-skilled fighter. He spent some time all mornings praying and thanking his god for his life, his order, his wife, and his two children.

His brother, another knight of his order, was Sir Brandon Van Hyden. Both knights were an example of their order, and the brothers led an honorable life, spreading their values everywhere they went.

Sir Wallace was married to Johanne, a fair and devoted woman. They raised two beautiful boys, and together, held a peaceful, quiet life. One of the best feelings in Sir Wallace's life was coming back home from a mission (he went away often because his magical and healing abilities were needed some place else). Lance and Bertrand, 6 and 8 years old respectively, ran to his arms screaming of joy. The proud paladin could not help but to shed a tear every single time this happened.

One day, Sir Wallace was sent away on a mission. He had to leave the country for a couple of months to help a neighbor country



that was at war. He was caught in the midst of the conflict and was captured. There was little he could do to escape, so he had to wait for his order to help him, if ever. Weeks and months went by, until the day his order gave him up for dead. He spent a year as a captive of war, eating barely enough to stay alive. The only reason he kept on was his family. He hoped to see his children once again, kiss his wife, he knew his god would never forsake him.

But fate gave Sir Wallace one of its bitterest servings. The settlement where he was held was recovered; he could at last go home. Little did Sir Wallace know what waited for him. He returned to his house only to find Johanne pregnant with a child who could not be his, and when confronted about the father, her silence was broken by his brother's arrival.

Sir Wallace could not handle this. Was his god mocking him? Was this some kind of

punishment? His family was the only thing he endured his captivity for. He felt betrayed, deceived, forsaken by his god. He could not handle the sight of his wife being with his own blood; in a rush of rage and fury, he killed his wife and family before they could explain. He was branded a murderer, he resisted his arrest, and fled the town.

He could not go anywhere. After weeks of roaming with no place to stay, he realized he had been weak and failed his faith. He felt tainted, and repentance filled his heart. He stopped eating and he could not get any sleep.

He arrived at the conclusion that he did not have any right to be alive. He hated himself and his god for the horrible fate they brought upon him. Before he could do any atonement for his wicked and heinous actions, he chose a darker path. He drove himself to a cliff and having a last look at the sky, he threw himself into oblivion and ended his own life.

As a paladin, he had already forgone his rights when he murdered his family, but committing suicide, he went beyond the boundaries of faith. His heart and soul drifted to their darkest side and his body arose as a blasphemy of what it once was. He was punished with eternal life, and an ever-lasting conscience. He now suffers every day as a permanent witness of his crimes, knowing he will never find rest.

Now his order hunts him. They do not tolerate the fact that one of their own opted for a darker path. Sir Wallace finds himself in a moral dilemma. His will to revendicate himself prevents him from harming his former order, but he cannot let them stop him from finding redemption.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Sir Wallace's motivation right now is to find a quest worthy of his god to clean his name so he can be put out of his misery. He has tried several times to end his life, only to find himself conscient and unliving once again.

Sir Wallace Van Hyden can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Sinner.** Sir Wallace knows what he has done. He knows he is responsible for his actions and although he is looking for atonement, he accepts his fate like the knight he was in life.
- **A Possible Ally.** He considers possible alliances with adventurers that could help him atone. He is looking forward to atoning and finding peace in dying once and for all.
- **Pursuer of Good.** Even though he knows his deeds were evil, he wants to repent and make up for everything he did.
- **An Able Fighter.** Sir Wallace is a very skilled fighter and will fight fearlessly if his mission to atone and repent is threatened.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Sir Wallace is looking for a real challenge. He wants an exploit so grand and so good that it is enough for his god to forgive him and let him find peace.

FLAWS

Sir Wallace is wary of all people. He does not trust anyone. It is hard to become close with him and gain his trust. He is suspicious of new-made friends due to his paranoia of betrayal.

SIR WALLACE VAN HYDEN

Medium undead, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 95 (10d8 + 50)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 11 (+0) | 20 (+5) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Dex +3, Wis +6, Cha +7

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

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

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

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *compelled duel*, *searing smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *magic weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *elemental weapon*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The death knight makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword (Sword of Repentance). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage if used with two hands,

REACTIONS

Parry. Sir Wallace adds 3 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

SWORD OF REPENTANCE

Weapon (Longsword), rare

The blade of this magical longsword is engraved with holy runes.

The longsword grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. In addition, on a successful hit against any non-good aligned creature, the sword deals an additional 1d8 necrotic damage.

On a successful hit against a good aligned creature, the sword deals no additional necrotic damage. Instead, the runes light up and the sword deals 4 (1d8) radiant damage to its wielder.

The runes on sword can be deciphered with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Religion) check. On a success, they decipher as *the good have no need to repent.*

STAGMOMANTIS

By: Sven Truckenbrodt
Artist: Jacob Blackmon

A patient and remorseless hunter, Stagmomantis is called upon when the Nine Hells want someone found and eliminated – quietly.

BACKGROUND

Stagmomantis was once a mortal creature, a giant mantis stalking the jungles of Chult. Her existence was satisfying, but not exciting. Stagmomantis often followed the lithe panthers with its facet eyes on her hunt – just out of reach – and contemplated how life would be, roaming like they did. So often Stagmomantis longed for prey just out of reach...

One day, the strangest creature wandered by: red, walking on two legs, horned, and looking down at a collection of dead leaves in its hands. Stagmomantis very much hoped that it would come close... just a bit closer... a bit more... a final stretch... and – strike! The creature did not, however, die immediately – it fought back! Stagmomantis had never felt anything like the rush of that struggle. The thrill soon turned into another unfamiliar emotion, however – despair.

This tiny thing – it was too powerful! Whatever it was, it wielded powers beyond Stagmomantis's comprehension. As Stagmomantis lay below it, broken beyond regeneration, its last thoughts were dreams of the lithe panther, roaming far and wide... and then, suddenly, a new light!

Stagmomantis awoke in a new body, warped by infernal magic – molded from its past form, into the perfect killer. The tiefling warlock Am'mandak who slew Stagmomantis barely survived the encounter and was intrigued by her skill. Her patience and single-minded dedication reminded her of her patron – the



Archdevil Dispater. She presented Stagmomantis, and Dispater was pleased – he took this creature into its service by re-incarnating it as a new form of devil

Dispater also gave Stagmomantis her new name and gifted her a sword to wield in his name. This sword, Mandible, would allow her to walk where she never could before – and explore the world like the lithe panther. She has since eagerly taken to this opportunity...

CURRENT MOTIVES

Stagmomantis is a born hunter – and a patient one. The hunt, more than the actual kill, is where she derives pleasure from. She takes any opportunity to stalk an unsuspecting prey when she is not on a mission – for the sheer thrill of it.

The Hand can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Stalker.** Stagmomantis enjoys the hunt even more than the kill and takes

every opportunity to practice her skill while without contract – which might be many weeks. The adventurers might find themselves the mark of Stagmomantis. How long will the stalk go unnoticed? Stagmomantis might be unhappy about being noticed, but she might also be intrigued by the adventurers' acumen.

- **A Hunter.** If the adventurers attract the attention of an antagonist in the Nine Hells, or someone sufficiently desperate to enter into a contract with a devil, they may well find themselves the next prey of Stagmomantis. As much as she enjoys the hunt – this is about the kill.
- **A Contractor.** The adventurers themselves might attempt to contract an assassin, tracker, or hunter for her own purposes. If they enquire with the right (or wrong?) people, they might be pointed, cryptically, to Stagmomantis. Stagmomantis doesn't shun contracts with mortals – but, as with all devils, her service comes at a price...
- **A Trap.** An unlucky adventurer may mistake the silent beauty watching them from the corner of a tavern for an easy hook-up without consequences.

TACTICS

Stagmomantis is an ambush predator. She typically tries to place herself in the path of her prey, where she remains motionless until the prey is in reach – and deliver a devastating strike once it is! Stagmomantis is supremely patient, stalking a mark for weeks or even months to wait for the prime opportunity to engage. Stagmomantis's goal is to kill with the first strike.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Unlike most devils, Stagmomantis cares little about advancing in the hierarchy of the Nine Hells. She has developed a strange interest in the society of the weird mortal humanoid beings she is often sent to kill, and explores their alien concepts of companionship.

FLAWS

Once the hunt has started, Stagmomantis must carry it through to its conclusion. Stagmomantis single-mindedly stalks the same prey for weeks or months. This is the source of her perfection, but it also distracts them from anything else.

As carefully as Stagmomantis may lay an ambush, her plans do not usually extend beyond the initial strike. Once she has one of her marks in her claws, she slides into the single-minded frenzy of an ambush hunter starving for the kill. She does not split her efforts, or make a tactical retreat, or leave off an unconscious or incapacitated target. If anything, this is a trigger for Stagmomantis to strike harder, until the kill is achieved.

Stagmomantis has had little to no success in her romantic endeavors among the mortal humanoids. Their ways of courtship are just too alien. Stagmomantis may be able to make herself look like them, using Mandible, but she has not learned to mimic their behavior. Should any opportunity present itself to engage in romance, Stagmomantis takes it – struggling against the black widow-like behavior patterns of her past life as a giant mantis...

MANDIBLE

Weapon (greatsword), very rare (requires attunement)

A fine but simple greatsword running to a sharp tip.

You gain a +2 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The greatsword has 6 charges. While attuned to it, you may use an action to expend one or more of its charges to:

- Cast *alter self* on yourself (2 charges). When cast in this way, you can only use the *Change Appearance* option of the spell.
- Cast *pass without trace* (1 charge).

Mandible regains 1d4 + 2 expended charges daily at dusk. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, Mandible gives off a high-pitched whine, folds in on itself, and is destroyed.

STAGMOMANTIS

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 18 (+4) | 16 (+3) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 12 (+1) |

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +7, Wis +7

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +11, Stealth +12, Survival +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 21

Languages Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

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

Mantis Agility. Stagmomantis's reflexes and agility allow them to move with a burst of speed. When she moves on her turn in combat, she can double her speed until the end of the turn. Once she uses this trait, she can't use it again until she moves 0 feet on one of her turns.

Ambush Predator. During its first turn, Stagmomantis has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit Stagmomantis scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mantis devil makes three attacks, one with its poison tongue, one with its raptorial arms, and one with Mandible (greatsword +2).

Poison Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage, plus 17 (5d6) poison damage, and the target has to succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become 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.

Raptorial Arms. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 14) and immediately pulled 5 ft. towards the mantis devil. In addition, at the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage. Until the grapple ends, the mantis devil can't use its raptorial arms on another target.

Mandible (greatsword +2). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

ULGRO THE WHISPERER

By: Seth J. Albano

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

A mummified ogre warlord whose role in the folklore of an old farming village keeps him preserved as much as the taint of undeath.

BACKGROUND

Generations ago, a remarkably intelligent ogre named Ulgro the Reckoner united a dozen tribes of his own people alongside an uncountable mass of goblins. On their way to raze the castle of a nearby duke, the marauding warlord's forces reduced each structure in their path to fuel and each inhabitant to meat. When one last village remained to feed his troops with before reaching the duke, Ulgro decided he had found the perfect place to set up camp and prepare siege engines for the final push.

Once he breached the walls of the village, however, Ulgro met with the greatest surprise of his life; an organized resistance of common farmers who, by some miracle, managed to fill the ogre's heart and belly with spears. Left suddenly leaderless, the amassed army first turned on itself, then retreated when the duke's knights finally arrived. In celebration of their unlikely victory, the commoners mummified Ulgro and entombed him in their local barrow, hoping to preserve the heroic story for future generations.

No one alive today remembers when it first happened, but years later it was discovered that, if one whispers to Ulgro in his tomb, the long-dead ogre may whisper back. In fact, it has been said that Ulgro the Whisperer can answer almost any question posed to him. The only tradeoff is that Ulgro's answers tend to be tinged with malice, and for harder questions he demands a sip of blood. The questioner's own blood will do, but the blood of another is even better. As such, only the very desperate seek



out Ulgro's advice, and local myths are rife with cautionary tales of his advice turning in on itself.

But the most depraved folk, so say the darkest legends, can go to Ulgro's tomb for more than just advice. By slitting a sentient being's throat and emptying its blood into Ulgro's mouth, the stories claim that the warlord can be enticed to awaken for one night to perform an evil deed. Most often, this deed entails mass murder.

CURRENT MOTIVES

The stories are only partially true. Ulgro does whisper advice to those who come to him, and he enjoys doing so if only to keep his undying mind stimulated. But the blood he demands doesn't satisfy the requirements of some dark ritual, it's just tasty. Ulgro can awaken at any time, he simply chooses not to because it pleases him to manipulate the descendants of his killers. In his tomb alone, he can remain ever-preserved, caught in a unique limbo between monster, mistake, and historical monument.

Ulgro the Whisperer can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Patron or Mentor.** Ulgro's undeath is a result of necrotic energy from the Shadowfell pooling inside the village's barrow. He is powerful enough to serve as a patron for a hexblade warlock, and with his vast knowledge he could also serve as a mentor for a shadow sorcerer or necromancer wizard. He can also hire adventuring parties to undertake quests on his behalf, paying them with buried treasure from his exploits as a warlord which he can point them towards.
- **A Nemesis.** Ulgro could be the mastermind behind any number of sinister plots, depending on who he whispers to. Characters from the village may have lost friends or family members to one of Ulgro's rampages and seek to end his reign of terror once and for all. Characters with a religious duty to destroy the undead might be dispatched to destroy Ulgro and purify the barrow's necrotic taint.
- **A Manipulator.** Ulgro is willing to give advice to nearly anyone. He may be bitter and maniacal, but his keen intelligence and insight ensures that his advice usually has a certain logic to it. On occasion, it may not even be malicious. After all, trust is the most valuable currency in Ulgro's schemes.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Despite his considerable strength, Ulgro is quite happy with his place in the barrow. Although many years can pass before anybody whispers to him, he knows it's always just a matter of time. Periods of inactivity are of little consequence to him as he carefully steers angst-ridden teenagers into becoming discontented adults with nothing to lose over the course of decades.

Insightful characters may notice that villagers are inclined to speak of Ulgro the Whisperer with a hint of pride in their voice, even when they're trying to sound frightened. While they don't exactly relish the company of an ogre mummy in their midst, the old warlord has become such a favorite villain in their fireside stories that most villagers would find themselves befuddled to learn he had been destroyed. If one or more outsiders were among those responsible for destroying Ulgro, the reaction would be a lot worse, and may even result in violence.

All of this is by design on Ulgro's part. His vengeful heart no doubt takes pride in all of the souls he's corrupted and all of the murders he's either inspired or participated in since his humiliating death generations ago. But Ulgro takes far more pride in the strange affection the village seems to have for him, which in his mind offers him protection and tools he wouldn't be able to find anywhere else. Indeed, the village's cherished folktales and the lengths the villagers will go to protect them grant Ulgro the Whisperer the ultimate contingency to back up his many conspiracies.

FLAWS

Although he's arrogant to a fault and driven by ultimately petty concerns, Ulgro's genius combined with his unending patience make these difficult qualities to exploit. Even so, Ulgro still has one weakness that, if leveraged against him properly, could destroy him without a fight. Unbeknownst to the mummy, his undead soul is bound to the village that created him. Should he ever travel beyond the village's boundaries, he would crumble to dust forever.

ULGRO THE WHISPERER

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 20 (+5) | 8 (-1) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) |

Saving Throws Wis +5

Skills Arcana +9, Deception +7, History +9, Intimidation +7, Religion +9

Vulnerabilities Fire

Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Giant, Goblin

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Barrowbound. Ulgro is sustained by energy from the Shadowfell leaking into the village's barrow, and that energy also tethers him to this location. Should Ulgro travel more than 1 mile beyond the barrow where he was entombed, he instantly turns to dust and is destroyed. Conversely, if Ulgro is ever reduced to 0 hit points by damage other than 20 or more points of radiant damage while within 1 mile of the barrow, he turns to dust only reform back in his tomb at midnight 1d10 weeks later.

Innate Spellcasting. Ulgro's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, spell attack +10). Ulgro can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

3/day each: *bane*, *ray of sickness*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *animate dead*, *create undead*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ulgro uses his Dreadful Glare and makes two attacks with his *hammer of rot*.

Hammer of Rot. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage, plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

Dreadful Glare. Ulgro the Whisperer targets one creature he can see within 60 ft. of him. If the target can see Ulgro, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom

saving throw or become frightened until the end of Ulgro's next turn. If the target fails this saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that passes its saving throw is immune to the Dreadful Glare of all mummies (but not Mummy Lords) for the next 24 hours.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Ulgro the Whisperer 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. Ulgro regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Attack. Ulgro attacks once with his *hammer of rot*.

Dreadful Glare. Ulgro uses his Dreadful Glare action on an eligible target.

Spellcasting. Ulgro casts one of the spells listed in his Innate Spellcasting trait.

HAMMER OF ROT

Weapon (warhammer), very rare (requires attunement)

A horrific hammer Ulgro the Whisperer constructed using his own bones.

You gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit with this weapon, it deals an extra 1d6 necrotic damage to the target. If wielded by a mummy, it deals an extra 3d6 necrotic damage instead.

UL'RODDEN DREAMSLAYER

By: Alan Tucker

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Once a renowned drow tracker and bounty hunter, Ul'rodden now plies his trade beyond the realms of men and beasts.

BACKGROUND

Ul'rodden Kenthriss was a name uttered with either deep respect or desperate fear by those in the drow community and beyond. His ability to track and apprehend his quarry had no peer. He brought countless fugitives to justice, and hunted an equal number of those who simply crossed paths with someone possessing more gold and power than themselves. Ul'rodden never passed judgement nor offered mercy. He simply took a job and completed it—no questions asked.

Despite his reputation—or perhaps because of it—Ul'rodden ultimately made an enemy he couldn't defeat: the archdevil, **Hutijin** (MToF, p 174). To continue his existence, Ul'rodden struck a deal with Hutijin, because the tracker cared for nothing in life besides the hunt. He now serves as Hutijin's personal seeker—finder of the unfindable. Forsaking his given surname, Ul'rodden has taken the moniker of Dreamslayer.

His soul forfeit, Ul'rodden's physical body transitioned to a state of undeath. He most closely resembles a zombie, but with speed and quickness no zombie has ever possessed. His armor, a boon from his master, Hutijin, was crafted from the hide of a barlgura and grants him a few special abilities. An extra-large **hell hound** (stats below) named Wrath is Ul'rodden's constant companion.

Ul'rodden's seemingly simple lair has the ability to manifest in planes other than the Prime Material, though that is where it was originally based.



Few know of Hutijin's master hunter. Fewer still have the means to contact or hire him. Ul'rodden has no need or desire for gold or other material goods. Information is his preferred currency and those who would contract his services better have something he wants.

Woe be to any who gain Ul'rodden's, or his master's, attention. There is nowhere to run or hide where the Dreamslayer will not find you.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Ul'rodden Dreamslayer has only one motive: to hunt. His entire existence revolves around his current target. During the infrequent periods when he has no mark to pursue, he is lost and without purpose. During his life, when these times of inactivity came, he made attempts to interact with society and play at fitting in. Ul'rodden no longer feels pressure to be a part

of the world of drow and men. When he is jobless, he sits in his lair, unmoving, until a quest comes to him—either from his master, or an outside source.

Ul'rodden can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** Ul'rodden has traveled the world and the planes in search of countless marks. Because of this, his mind has become a repository of esoteric facts about any number of people, places, or things.
- **A Hired Hand.** Few have anything he wants, but if your party has information of a unique nature, Ul'rodden may be engaged to hunt for them.
- **A Villain.** Pick a character to be a target for the Dreamslayer. Perhaps a powerful enemy from their past has hired Ul'rodden, or they have gained the ire of a notable devil who wishes them captured or eliminated in a quiet way.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Ul'rodden exists to hunt. There is nothing else of interest to him. The only time he feels alive is when he is in pursuit of a mark.

FLAWS

His unwavering obsession was considered a flaw in life, but his current situation makes it preferable. He is somewhat reluctant to extinguish anything he feels he might be able to exploit as an asset in the future.

ARMOR OF THE BARLGURA

leather armor, legendary (requires attunement)

This armor glistens a midnight blue in the light and is trimmed with tufts of red fur. It was created by the archdevil Hutijin as a gift for Ul'rodden Dreamslayer.

This armor gives you +2 to your AC and saving throws as well as granting a number of spellcasting abilities, requiring no spellcasting components. The spell save DC is 13 for these abilities. Twice per day you can cast disguise self and invisibility (self only), and once per day you can cast entangle and phantasmal force.

You also gain the ability to leap like the demon whose skin formed the basis of this armor. Your long jump is 40 feet and your high jump is 20 when you have a running start.

UL'RODDEN DREAMSLAYER

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (leather)

Hit Points 187 (22d8 + 88)

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 22 (+6) | 19 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 5 (-3) |

Saving Throws Dex +11, Int +7

Skills Acrobatics +11, Investigation +7, Perception +13, Stealth +16, Survival +13

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

Languages Common, Undercommon, Infernal

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces Ul'rodden to 0 hit points, he must make 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, Ul'rodden drops to 1 hit point instead.

Evasion. When Ul'rodden is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage on a success and half damage on a failure.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Ul'rodden deals an extra 17 (5d6) when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally that isn't incapacitated and Ul'rodden doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Undead Nature. Ul'rodden doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ul'rodden makes four attacks with his bow or longsword.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. Hit:11 (1d8 + 7) piercing damage.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit:7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

WRATH (HELL HOUND)

Large fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 12 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 8 (-1) | 14 (+2) | 6 (-2) |

Skills Perception +6

Damage Immunities Fire

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Infernal (understands but can't speak)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. Wrath has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. Wrath 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.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit:9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). Wrath exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

UL'RODDEN DREAMSLAYER'S

LAIR

By Alan Tucker

Map: Dyson Logos

BACKGROUND

Ul'rodden Dreamslayer was one of the most accomplished bounty hunters in drow history, yet one day, he met his match in an archdevil named Hutijin. Now, Ul'rodden hunts for Hutijin and his modest lair has become a means of travel between the planes.

APPROACHING THE LAIR

As the party approaches the lair, read or summarize:

An inviting, grassy knoll rises before you. A single vibrant tree sits atop it, its leaves rustling in the slight breeze that tickles your cheeks. Beneath the tree, a dark opening beckons, but an imagined whisper of warning gives you pause for a moment.

A series of steps, rough-hewn from earth and stone lead down about 10 feet into a lightless tunnel.

GENERAL FEATURES

Terrain. Stone, dirt, and loose gravel.

Weather. Cool inside, like a cellar or cave.

Light. None unless otherwise noted.

Smells and Sounds. Small amounts of fine dust and a cool humidity fill the air. Running water can be heard throughout the space.

AREA 1

As the party enters Area 1, read or summarize:

About 20 feet in the tunnel splits into two branches. The left appears similar in size to what you've been traversing. The right opens up more, but you hear running water coming from both directions.

AREA 2

As the party enters Area 2, read or summarize:

The short passage opens into a natural chamber approximately 20 feet wide by 30 feet long. To the east, the floor rises a few feet, creating a curved shelf about 5 feet wide and running the length of the room. It rises again before dropping off into the source of the sounds that have grown steadily louder since you entered this small cave system.

DON'T PAY THE FERRYMAN

The water moving through Ul'rodden's lair is actually a small tributary to the River Styx. Any creature who touches or drinks from the water must succeed on a **DC 19 Wisdom saving throw** or become stunned. This effect lasts until a *lesser restoration*, or similar spell, is cast on the creature. A success means no effect, but a creature must repeat the saving throw each time they touch or drink the water, or every minute they stay in contact with it (e.g. swimming).

Prolonged exposure to the waters of the River Styx causes permanent memory loss and even total loss of all mental faculties.

Ul'rodden's cave exists on many planes simultaneously. By concentrating within its confines, he can travel to any of the planes where it has a foothold. The DM can determine the extent of the lair's reach.

From the tall ledge, or the open northern edge of the chamber, characters with darkvision or sufficient light source can get a glimpse of Area 5.

AREA 3

As the party enters Area 3, read or summarize:

After a gentle bend to the east, the tunnel is interrupted by a 10-foot-wide creek. Its waters are dark and almost beguiling in the way they flow past. The tunnel continues east on the other side.

Those with darkvision, or a superior light source, can see a simple-looking door at the end of the tunnel across the water. See Area 2: Don't Pay the Ferryman for details about the strange waters.

AREA 4

As the party reaches the door to Area 4, read or summarize:

A wooden door bars your passage here. It looks well-maintained and recently used.

The door is locked with an extremely sophisticated lock requiring a **DC 26 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check** to unlock. Failure triggers a poison gas trap. Any creatures within 10 feet of the door must succeed on a **DC 18 Constitution saving throw** or take 36 (8d8) poison damage, half on a successful save. The door can be broken by normal physical means, but doing so without disarming the trap triggers the gas and its effects.

Once inside Area 4, read or summarize:

The contents of this roughly 30 foot by 40 foot chamber are simple, but tidy. A sturdy desk and chair occupy the eastern wall, along with a bookshelf and two large trunks. Well-worn targets hang on the northern wall. Otherwise, the space seems empty.

There is no bed because Ul'rodden requires no sleep. The only time he really spends in his domicile is when he's not on a mission, which is rare. Inside one of the trunks is a thick, leather-bound journal containing a detailed history of his exploits, written in Undercommon, dating back nearly two hundred years. The DM can use this to plant adventure seeds or provide clues

to something the characters are already involved with.

Another book is magical and contains writings in Infernal—communications between Ul'rodden and his patron, Hutijin. It has a twin that resides with his master. Anything written in its pages appears in the other book. Within, the characters can find information about Ul'rodden's targets since becoming an agent for the archdevil.

In addition, the characters find a sack with 550 gp and 95 pp, and a box with an assortment of potions and/or scrolls (roll 1d4 + 2 times on Magic Item Table D of the DMG, p 145, ignoring rolls over 87). There are also two *arrows of slaying*: one giant and one dragon.

AREA 5

As the party enters Area 5, read or summarize:

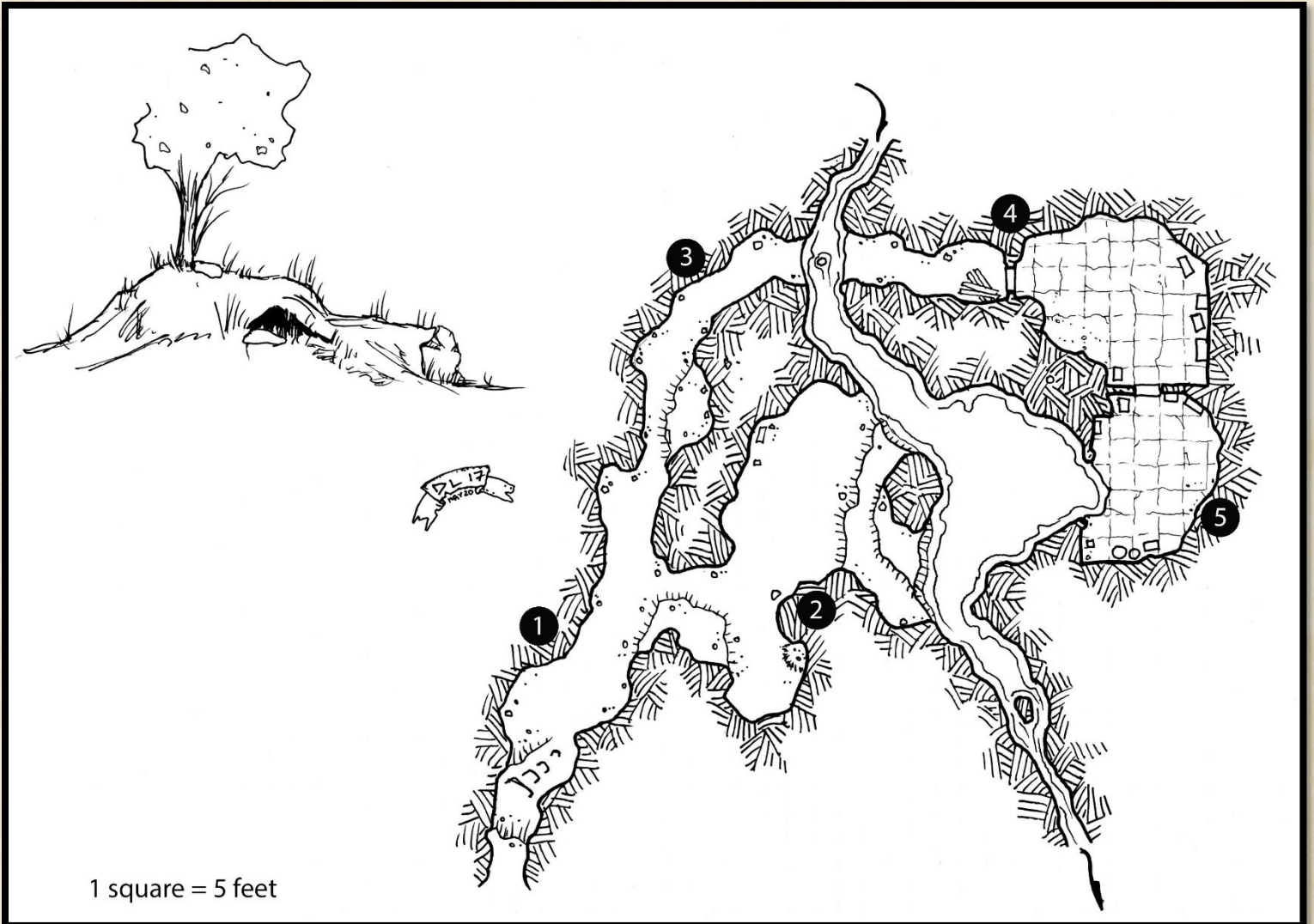
At first glance, this chamber appears to be the practice area for a careless fire wizard. Scorch marks darken the walls and floor in numerous places and a large mound of smoldering coals lies in the southern end. Broken and burnt pieces of furniture litter the place, along with a number of gnawed bones.

This is Wrath's sleeping area and the large hell hound is not a good housekeeper. Ul'rodden allows his companion to do as he wishes in this chamber in exchange for not setting fire to the rest of the lair.

IS ANYONE HOME?

Whether Ul'rodden and Wrath are present when the party comes upon the lair is entirely up to the DM and how you want to use these NPCs in your campaign. If outmatched, Ul'rodden attempts to escape using any means necessary. He knows, if slain, the rest of his existence will be spent in unending torture and agony at the hands of hell and his days of hunting would be over forever.

UL'RODDEN DREAMSLAYER'S LAIR



UMBORLO, CANON OF SHAME

By: Ryan FitzGerald

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

Umborlo broke his religious vows in the very sanctum of the temple to which he had devoted his life, fatally seduced by a pride that compromised his humility.

BACKGROUND

Umborlo rose high through the ranks of the clergy in the service of Helm. Justice and a just guardianship of those who prayed for protection were the principles by which Umborlo lived.

Umborlo's resolve was never tested. As he acquired power and status, his heart darkened. First, he expected obedience from the inferior acolytes. Then he grew to demand it.

It was in this state that he met Istrinda, a novice. Her devotion to Helm was pure but Umborlo, blinded by lust and power misinterpreted her joy as love. He turned cruel and forgot his service to Helm in his arrogance.

One night, he confronted her in the temple. He chastised and mocked her for the weaknesses he perceived. When she corrected him, seeking to assure Umborlo that her devotion to Helm was chaste and steadfast, he heard the truth in her voice and his cheeks burned with shame. He drew his dagger and slew her with a single stroke. As she fell, her blood staining the temple, her innocence fell away and she saw Umborlo as he had truly become — a petty man, corrupted by power, who had turned his back on the first principles of service to Helm. Her dying breath gave power to the curse that fell from her lips. Her blood and Umborlo's shame fell on him like a cloak of poison. He howled and fled the temple.

He passed the miserable night paralyzed by pride and shame. When the sun rose, its light



burned him and drove him deeper into darker recesses. His madness fueled Istrinda's curse and the transformation to an avatar of shame was complete. Umborlo was undead.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Umborlo gnashes his teeth and wails, reeling from insensate rage at the injustice he feels was done to him to abject despair at how he allowed himself to fall from grace in the service of a just lord.

Umborlo can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Corruptor.** Umborlo may claim embarrassment at disfigurement to speak from the darkness, begging a party of good-aligned heroes to rob or hurt an innocent who he claims is the source of his wounding.
- **A Test.** A prelate from a good-aligned temple has learned that Umborlo haunts an unholy place. The prelate

begs the party to reach the goodness she knows still lies inside Umborlo.

- **A Vendetta.** The family of the slain novice demands justice for their murdered daughter. Umborlo the monster cannot be suffered to live, so the party is hired to hunt him down like a beast in its lair and end the travesty of its continued undeath.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Umborlo craves redemption but cannot bring himself to beg for forgiveness — not from deities, who he fears, nor from mortals, who he holds in contempt. In self-indulgence and self-pity, he haunts defiled places, scuttling from shadow to shadow, hating the judgement that will bear witness to his deeds in the light of day.

FLAWS

Whenever he sees female clerics, Umborlo is reminded of how he saw only Instrinda's beauty and chastity and violated his vow and both their lives. Persuasion and Intimidation attempts made by female clerics and paladins to hold Umborlo to account for his crime are made at advantage and contested against Umborlo's Insight.

SASH OF MEMORY

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

A black belt of supple leather, edged with fine, scarlet silk.

In private, Umborlo uses the Sash of Memory to recreate alternate retellings of how his confrontation with Istrinda could have or should have proceeded. Stealthy heroes might observe one of these scenes to gain clues on how to confront Umborlo.

While wearing this belt, you gain:

- Advantage on attempts to disbelieve illusions and phantasms.
- Ability to cast the spell *major illusion* (3/Day).

UMBORLO, CANON OF SHAME

Medium undead (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 10 (+0) | 17 (+3) | 15 (+2) |

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +5

Skills Religion +3, Intimidation +5, Perception +6,
Persuasion +5

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Cruel Remorse (3/Day). As a bonus action, Umborlo can wail a howl of such pitiable grief that all who hear within 30 feet must make a DC14 Wisdom saving throw or be overcome and suffer the *stunned* condition until the end of their next turn.

Caustic Tears. Umborlo endlessly weeps tears that cause 3 (1d6) acid damage against melee attackers within 5 feet of him.

Sunlight Sensitivity. Umborlo suffers 3 radiant damage when he starts his turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, he has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Summon Thrall (3/Day). Umborlo can summon a Shadow that serves his bidding. The risen shadow attacks the next round on its own initiative count.

ACTIONS

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) slashing damage, plus 5 (2d4) acid damage.

Obligated Contrition. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) psychic damage.

VIRGIL THE ACCURSED

By: Darren Kenny

Artist: Peter Temesi

A cycle of life and rebirth, the slow decay of a man's mind as he drowns in a sea of suffering. Virgil knows little, but when a memory resurfaces his vengeance becomes a deadly torrent of blood and fear.

BACKGROUND

Virgil remembers little of his life as a child, knowing only that he once belonged to a noble and devoutly religious family. As the years piled on, his memories fragmented, distorted and became an unsolvable puzzle that haunts Virgil.

Virgil remembers his first death, a brutal human sacrifice to the God of Undeath. After dying, he awoke in the same sacrificial chamber surrounded by the corpses of those who killed him. He drew the dagger from his chest and watched the wound heal. The dagger, *Life's Bane*, became a gift from the God of Undeath.

Virgil has died a dozen times since that day, over the course of an unknown amount of time. Each time he dies, he awakens inside that sacrificial chamber, and each time his mind slips further into madness and despair. With only a loose grip on reality, the next death could sever the last tether between Virgil and his sanity.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Virgil the Accursed seeks individuals, items and places of significance to his past. He seeks a link to his life before the sacrifice.

Virgil the Accursed can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **An Assassin.** Virgil may have been contracted to kill one of the adventurers, or one of the party's allies



or family members in exchange for information on his past.

- **A Target.** A noble or some other ranking individual may learn they have become a mark of Virgil the Accursed, or could have previously killed the undying killer. Whether the noble has a family tie to Virgil or not, this link could make him the enemy of the party.
- **A Ghost from the Past.** A member of the party may have had an encounter with Virgil where they or an ally killed Virgil. He may even be an ancestor of the party member. If the party has any connection to Virgil, he is driven mad by the sight of that person and attempts to kill them.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Virgil seeks his history, the life he lost when he was sacrificed to the God of Undeath.

FLAWS

Virgil the Accursed is easily tricked and often believes the lies of others. If a creature pretends to know information of his past, he is likely to believe them.

When Virgil the Accursed dies, *Life's Bane* turns to ash and he spends 3d10 days regenerating his body. If this half-formed body is set aflame, he is killed forever. If the sacrificial chamber in which he is reborn is burnt to the ground, he can no longer regenerate but if he is not within the temple, he does not die permanently until killed once more. If the temple is destroyed, *Life's Bane* turns to ash.

If Virgil is reduced to zero hit points by his own dagger, *Life's Bane*, he is permanently killed leaving, *Life's Bane* behind.

LIFE'S BANE

Weapon (dagger), unique (requires attunement)

A dagger shaped like a spine.

You gain a +2 to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. A creature that is reduced to 0 hit points by this weapon is killed (no death saves).

Life's Bane has 5 charges. While attuned to it, you can use any of the following powers:

- (Reaction, 1 charge) After hitting with Life's Bane, you can use your reaction to deal 1d12 necrotic damage. You regain the same number of hit points up to your maximum health total.
- (Bonus Action, 2 charges) You can cast *hunter's mark* at 3rd level.

Life's Bane regains 1d4 + 1 charges daily at dawn.

VIRGIL THE ACCURSED

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (*studded leather armor +1*)

Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)

Speed 40 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +6

Skills Acrobatics +9, Perception +3, Stealth +9

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Celestial, Abyssal

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces Virgil the Accursed to 0 hit points, he must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken. On a success, Virgil the Accursed drops to 1 hit point instead.

Reaping Blade (3/Day). As a bonus action, Virgil the Accursed can convert his dagger into a curved scythe-like blade. Virgil's next attack is made against every creature of his choosing within melee range.

Assassinate. During his first turn, Virgil has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit Virgil scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Sneak Attack. If Virgil the Accursed makes an attack against a creature with advantage, he deals an additional 4d6 damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Virgil the Accursed makes three attacks with Life's Bane.

Life's Bane. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d4 + 7) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. Virgil the Accursed halves the damage that it takes from an attack that hits him. He must be able to see the attacker.

XIPHEK

By: Maxine Henry

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

BACKGROUND

Early in life, Xiphek was precocious in the arts of war and survival. She grew into a powerful and wily orog of the Northdark, doing jobs for whoever had the need and the method of payment. Her specialization in diversionary and devastating martial techniques gained her renown in orcish circles, even beyond the Underdark.

Where the Frozen Sea meets the Far Forest, the orc tribes of Ice Ax and Hoarfrost fought for dominance over what was claimed by each tribe as ancestral lands. Their battles always pitted almost equal forces, and much orc blood was spilled for little gain.

Hearing tales of Xiphek, representatives of both tribes went in search of the cunning mercenary, each hoping to recruit her to their side. Hoarfrost representatives reached her first, and they contracted a deal, much to the chagrin of Ice Ax. And so, Xiphek fought for Hoarfrost, and the war turned in their favor.

Desperate, Ice Ax came up with a plan. One of their most powerful shamans attempted to coerce Xiphek's spirit in the hopes of using her to assassinate the Hoarfrost chieftain. The shaman chose her moment well: the heat of a pitched battle for a valuable river crossing. While Xiphek was directing forces—and distracted from personal defenses—the shaman struck.

Xiphek's will was stronger than the shaman's, and she was able to remain free, but her body was not able to sustain the strain. While Hoarfrost was successful in winning the river ford, they mourned the death of their orog commander. Xiphek's will was so strong, however, she did not fully die.



Instead, she lingered in an in-between state, not fully alive, not fully dead, and never at rest. In the time it took for her to gain control of her new state, the two tribes destroyed each other. Now Xiphek roams the northeastern areas of Faerun, the remembrance of her life embodied in the red armor within which she manifests.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Xiphek is drawn to adventurers who have a cause. If their cause is just, she is more likely to help them. If their cause is unjust, she is more likely to betray them.

Xiphek is drawn to adventurers who have experienced the pain of betrayal. No matter the source, that fact makes her more sympathetic to their mission.

Xiphek can be used as:

- **A Villain.** In her quest for revenge, Xiphek has been known to hunt magic users. No fool, however, she retreats and regroups if outmatched.
- **A Bodyguard.** Being undead, Xiphek doesn't need to rest. Her Vengeful Glare ability puts her above most other bodyguards in terms of intimidation.
- **A Negotiator.** Xiphek understands orc politics and battle tactics. She knows the value of choosing one's battles, as well as cost-benefit analysis in warfare.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Xiphek wants to be released from the state of undeath she finds herself in. However, she is too proud to throw a fight, and still burns with the need to revenge herself on any and all users of magic. The fact that some magic users have good and constructive aims has become faded in what remains of her mind.

FLAWS

Xiphek is not patient and is predisposed against any individual that uses magic. She is outrightly hostile to any individual that uses magic to control another being.

XIPHEK

Medium undead, neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 136 (16d8 +64)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 18 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 18 (+4) |

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +2, Wis +6, Cha +7

Skills Intimidation +5, Survival +2

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic, acid

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Orc, Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Armor-Bound. Xiphek is bound to her armor. When she would take damage, the armor takes it instead.

Regeneration. Xiphek's armor regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. If it takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn. Xiphek's armor is destroyed only if she starts her turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Rejuvenation. When Xiphek's armor is destroyed, her soul lingers. After 24 hours, her distinctive red armor reforms, anchoring her soul to the Material plane, and it regains all her hit points. While her armor is destroyed, a *wish* spell can be used to force her soul to go to the afterlife and not return.

Turn Immunity. Xiphek is immune to effects that turn undead.

Vengeful Tracker. Xiphek knows the distance to and direction of any creature against which she seeks revenge, even if the creature and Xiphek are on different planes of existence. If the creature being tracked by Xiphek dies, she knows.

Aggressive. As a bonus action, Xiphek can move up to her speed toward a hostile creature she can see.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Xiphek makes two greataxe attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) slashing damage.

Vengeful Glare. Xiphek targets one creature she can see within 30 feet of her and against which she has declared vengeance. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until Xiphek deals damage to it, or until the end of Xiphek's turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of Xiphek 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 Xiphek, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

ZUUSK THE COLD

By: GM Lent

Art provided by Wizards of the Coast

There are two things everyone knows about mind flayers: they prefer eating the brains of sentient creatures and they make bad neighbors because of it. Zussk had a different idea: conquest of the surface world might be made easier by learning to live amongst its denizens.

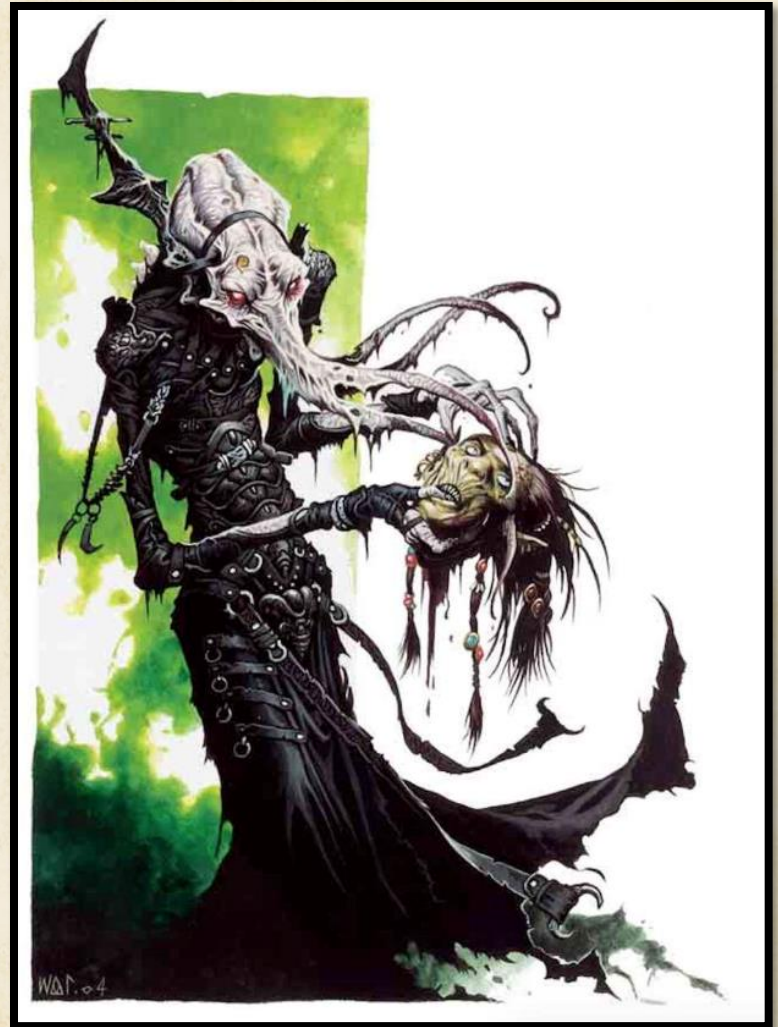
BACKGROUND

Zussk was always an outlier. As a tadpole, it was larger than usual, and fiercer, but never had an interest in cannibalizing its poolmates. While the elders balked a bit at the prospect of placing the tadpole once it matured, they proceeded as usual and during ceremorphosis everything seemed normal.

As an adult Zussk performed its duties faithfully and served the Elder Brain like any other mind flayer. Always eager to be of service, Zussk was happy to lead raids and incursions into the overworld, and took a keen scholarly interest in the cultures of the alien food—humans, elves, dwarves, and the like—that inhabited the sunlit lands.

Zussk's betrayal was sudden and, for the hyper-intelligent illithid elder brain, embarrassing. One moment, Zussk was performing an extended, dangerous reconnaissance mission, and the next moment it had disappeared entirely. It took years for the illithid colony to learn the truth: Zussk had removed its mind from the collective and was now invisible to them.

At first, they believed perhaps Zussk had become an alhoon—an undead mind flayer possessing powerful and forbidden magics—but in fact Zussk had opted to forego eating intelligent brains in order to live peacefully among the overworld creatures. This dietary change had profound effects upon the illithid's body and psychic abilities.



Lacking the enzymes necessary to create the thin layer of psychic mucus that normally maintained its amphibious exterior, Zussk's skin dried and shriveled upon its bones. To compensate, Zussk created a suit of leather, bone, and steel containing intricate mechanisms that keep its skin hydrated. Now known as a "desiccated" illithid, Zussk lives disguised among the creatures of Baldur's Gate, ever careful to avoid interactions with its former colony—members of which continually hunt for the rogue former lieutenant.

CURRENT MOTIVES

Zussk's primary goal remains and must remain avoidance of other illithids and their allies. Unfortunately, unlike most creatures who try to

avoid mind flayers, Zussk cannot count on help from the surface world, who hesitate to believe Zussk feeds only on the brains of unintelligent animals. In the meantime, Zussk lends its natural propensity for order and discipline to assist scholars in their research.

Zussk can be used as an NPC as follows:

- **A Source of Information.** Zussk has intimate knowledge of Underdark races and cultures, and feels no particular loyalty to any organization or individual below. With access to the great library of Candlekeep as well as others, Zussk can provide insight and information on many topics.
- **A Villain.** Zussk is no friendlier than other illithids, and no less intelligent. It has no real concern for the lives or petty squabbles of those around it, and if prompted with a tempting enough offer—of wealth, information, or something else of tactical advantage—Zussk has no problem betraying or manipulating those who seek its aid.

LONG TERM MOTIVES

Zussk cares little for material wealth except as such wealth is useful to achieve other ends. Ultimately, Zussk's endgame is not substantially different from those of common mind flayers: it seeks to dominate Toril and indeed all worlds. Zussk decided to adapt to overworld living specifically to further this goal, and any who attribute its intelligent-brain-free diet to any other motive will be sorely disappointed.

FLAWS

Zussk is still an illithid, and its arrogance has not diminished since it left its colony. Zussk has a propensity for underestimating any creature that isn't a mind flayer—a fact that clever PCs can use against Zussk to their advantage.

Zussk the Cold

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (hide)

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 10 (+0) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) | 19 (+4) | 17 (+3) | 20 (+5) |

Skills Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +8

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 60ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

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

Mind blank. Zussk is immune to psychic damage, any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, divination spells, and the charmed condition.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). Zussk's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

3/day: *detect thoughts*

1/day each: *suggestion, levitate, teleport* (self only)

Stench. Any creature other than Zussk that starts its turn within 5 feet of them must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to Zussk's stench for 1 hour

ACTIONS

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 11 (2d6 + 4) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15) and must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Extract Brain. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the Zussk. **Hit:** The target takes 27 (6d8) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the mind flayer kills the target by extracting and devouring its brain.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6). Zussk magically emits psychic energy in a 30-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or take 44 (8d8 + 8) psychic damage and be stunned until the end of its next turn.

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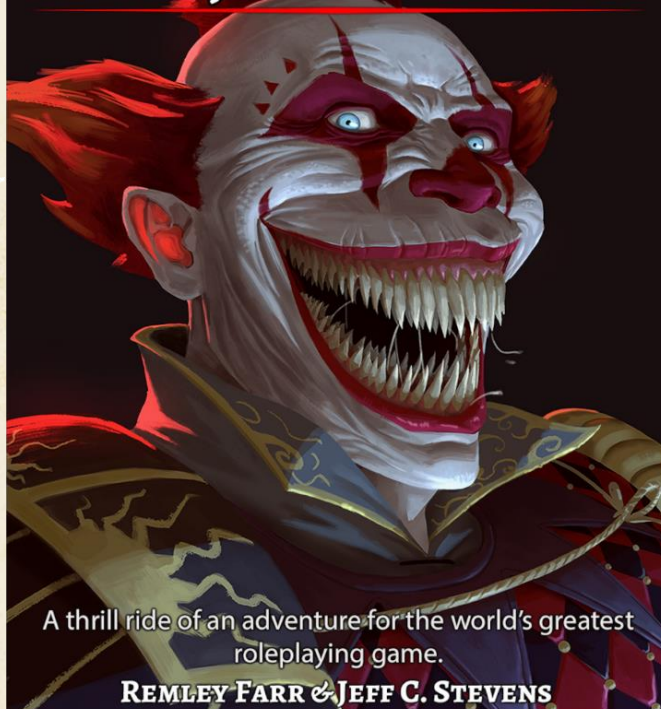
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