

# WARLOCK

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MIDGARD & MYTHOS



# WARLOCK

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Warlocks, Witches, and Wanderings .....	2
The Forbidden Mountains of Beldestan <i>By Wolfgang Baur</i> .....	3
The Delights of Enkada Pishtuhk <i>By Troy E. Taylor with Ben McFarland</i> .....	9
Legacy of the Unhinged Gardeners <i>by Richard Green</i> .....	13
Void-Touched: Warped Flesh and Twisted Minds <i>By Dan Dillon</i> .....	17

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# WARLOCKS, WITCHES, AND WANDERINGS

Welcome to *Warlock*, the first in a series of sourcebooks for Midgard and 5th Edition! The Kobold Press crew is excited to offer some semi-regular updates for the world, some house rules you won't find in other, less doom-ridden tomes, and an outlet for things that just never quite fit somewhere else.

What is *Warlock*? This time around, it's about the Mythos, the twisted alien bits of void magic and cults that Midgard seems to spawn everywhere. But that won't be part of every one in the *Warlock* series.

You can call it a miscellany or a dungeoneer's encyclopedia or even the dreams of the Great Wyrmlord Veles (the serpent who is the world). It has dragons. It's going to have dungeons.

It's a mix of our darker fantasy monsters, magic, and mayhem with a bit of worldbuilding thrown in. It's frankly a way to talk about events, characters, and mechanics for Midgard without doing a full-bore sourcebook. It's going to cover people, dungeons, and creatures from the shores of the Arbonesse to the heights of Beldestan and beyond. Do you want an installment devoted to "what about the elves"? Or a few thoughts on "dwarven fortifications and freeholds with stats for mass combat"? Certainly, we might oblige



you, or we might follow our own skirling, alien, orgiastic muses down other paths to stranger towers of amethyst that rise from the waves near Capleon, singing songs to bring even the doughiest minotaur sailor to the brink of bitter tears at memories of youth and joy and promises never kept.

We do not take submissions. (We're not a magazine! It's a sourcebook!) However, we very much do hope to see comments and feedback, and we promise to keep it weird.

Thanks for your support!

# THE FORBIDDEN MOUNTAINS OF BELDESTAN

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*By Wolfgang Baur*

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**B**eldestan is a high, arid land with little more than goats and pastures—and mines filled with mithral and steel for those strong enough to hold them. For long ages, it was the heart of the dwarven Trakhan Kingdom, a place of great industry and dozens of well-fortified hill fortresses and clan halls dug deep into the hills.

In more recent years, the dwarves' rule fell to banditry and dark magic, and the clans abandoned the mines for the Towers of Khubara. Several human hill tribes took over the ruins and kept its mines open, though only by allying themselves with forces of darkness.

The Satrapy of Beldestan has become a place of casual violence and constant feuding. Indeed, the families kill and betray one another as entertainment, and tribal loyalties run deep. The ruling noble houses—Bastun, Yllomir, Kluchiss, and Plendremin—largely prefer to make their slaves do the mining, and all travelers are considered fair game. Mine owners and petty lordlings often hire gnolls and dwarves as slavers, many of whom have settled in the cities and ruins of Beldestan.

Slaving, goat-stealing, bride-theft, and kidnapping are all common in Beldestan. Those who cannot keep their families safe are mocked as weaklings and cowards.

## **Dark Temples and Ancient Wisdom**

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Beldestan is known for being one of those rare places that praises dark gods openly and with great gusto. The Beldestanis consider their pantheon stronger and more practical than the high-minded angels or rapacious dragon gods of nearby kingdoms. Indeed, human sacrifices are part of everyday life in Beldestan, for its priesthoods demand blood and treasure in return for their blessings. Beldestan is fiercely loyal to a range of dark gods and has built temples to a dark Veles of the Void as well as to Khorsa, to Sabateus, and much darker gods still—darakhul monks and dhampir priests are rare but not unknown. Few linger long in Beldestan: the weak are often bundled off to mine iron or mithral until they die, and the strong seize what they can and leave for more congenial pastures.

## **Stairs of Beldestan**

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Beldestan has long been a site of pilgrimage, a direct route from dusty earth up to the heavens where enormous creatures soar and carry sacrifices to the gods. The base of its monumental stairs is well known for the efficacy of the invocations offered there, but very few other than the most faithful dare venture up the stairs themselves: enormous eagles, howling winds, and various inimical undead make the stairs a place that few find congenial for long.

Those who climb the full height and return, however, are favored in the eyes of the gods, and certainly, accomplishing such a feat is a daring and worthy endeavor. Many have set off for the heights, and but a few have returned, somewhat scarred and sometimes wiser for the effort.

True heroes might have several reasons to climb the stairs:

- To acquire a quiver full of roc feathers at a mage's request
- To prove their worthiness to an order of champions
- To reach the meadow of stones where a powerful drake shares prophecies
- To visit a great void dragon's citadel at the edge of the void and sail the astral winds
- To carry a message to an archmage who lives at the top of the stairs, a member of house Plendremin

## Towers of Khubara

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On Beldestan's northern border, beyond most of the ruins that dot its landscape, the dwarf descendants of Trakhan live in one small city-state high in the steppes, flanked by towering mountain peaks and paying a nominal tribute to the Satrapy of Beldestan. The Towers of Khubara is a mixed nation of dwarves, humans, and a scattering of other local races. The city of Khubara is formed primarily of tall towers, and those who dwell there take the height of their dwelling as a matter of pride and status. Bridges and walkways span the gaps between the towers, and a traveler can walk from one side of the city to another and never touch the ground.

The skilled craftsmen here produce many goods for trade with Beldestan and beyond. The swiftest falcons in the world are bred hereabout. Smaller than peregrines, they have red feathers on their breasts and are famed for their speed and skill. Turquoise is found in great abundance in these

mountains as are plentiful seams of iron, mithral, and a unique form of metal called *ada*, which is used to make wave-washed steel. On a critical hit, weapons made of this form of steel can shatter an opponent's shield or armor, reducing their AC by 1 until it is repaired.

## Towns and Clanholds

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Beldestan is littered with hundreds of tiny villages, freeholds, and crossroad towns, each protective of its special status, its road taxes, and its peculiar traditions, from the cultivation of ebon frogs to the trepanation of blasphemers to outright slavery. Here are a few of its larger steadings and familial strongholds.

**Bastun's Hold:** A family of human mining barons took over the richest of the dwarven Al Trakhar mithral mines here and has kept it in their hands for three generations. The town itself is half on the surface and half in dwarven halls repurposed for human heights and decorations. A dwarven gatehouse called the Giant's Skull has become the seat of power and counting house, where precious metals are stored. The local warlord, the Khan Jan Sardhana al-Bastun (LE male human eldritch knight 12) is a follower of Vardesain and feeds troublemakers to a deep pit called the "Pit of Ghouls." It is said that many of his helmeted guards are not human but simply darakuhl, expanding the Hunger God's power here. Certainly the bodies of Khan Sardhana's enemies often disappear without any trace, and priests of gods of sun, life, and justice rarely survive a visit to Bastun.

**Galna:** The capital city is home to a dozen sites of great power and great horror: the enigmatic Knotted Ley Line of Galna puzzles all arcanists, of course, but also of note are the gambling halls in the Cloud Temple of Azuran, the Blood Caverns of Vardesain, and the Echoing Cathedral of

## ADANISK OR ADA (WAVE-WASHED STEEL)

Adanisk is a very rare type of steel that has a unique wave-like pattern and is light, flexible, and very strong.

When crafted from iron, ada metal, and natural woods, wave-washed steel becomes a wonderful material from which

to create beautiful weapons. Armor is almost never crafted from adanisk. Other items not primarily of metal are not meaningfully affected by being partially made of adanisk. (A longsword can be a wave-washed weapon, while a staff cannot.)

Veles, often visited by emissaries from the Mharoti lands (who tend to depart quickly once their offerings are made). In addition, the monthly rites of the Goat of the Woods are considered either horrific or strangely attractive to visitors: they take the form of something like a public orgy in the Horned Temple of the Ebon Moon, though invariably several of the participants are never heard from again.

At its heart is the vast palace called the Seat of Beldes Wisdom, a marble-halled home to the Autarch Alestos and his harem of 33 beautiful men, women, catfolk, gnolls, and (so it is said) doppelgangers able to take the form of gods or devils with equal ease. Some of these are wives with status, others are gifts from kingdoms as far away as Sailendra and Nuria Natal, and others still are ambassadors or travelers unfortunate enough to catch Alestos's eye and retained as little more than prisoners.





The Seat of Beldes Wisdom surrounds and is interpenetrated by the Indigo Halls of Sabateus, the temple of the mysterious void-ridden god of stars and magic who is much loved by the autarch and many of the realm's wealthiest bandits, dukes, and archmages. The Indigo Halls are home to the immensely powerful Khatun Bibi Kaftar, sometimes called the Empress of Beldestan, and she rules the spiritual life of the Satrapy with a stern predilection for law and order.

The Indigo Halls of Galna are said to house more than four hundred priests and priestesses of various degrees of wisdom, from the Indigo initiates to the blind seers and devoted souls of the elder

ranks. The priesthood makes its way among the Indigo Halls through Living Doorways, hallways, and entire rooms decorated in silver mirrors and studded with star-like ceilings made of gems and lapis lazuli. A hundred ghosts and phantoms of the priests buried in its walls are said to watch over the kingdom, and certainly, *magic mouths* and similar spells discourage petty thievery of its gems, sacred scrolls, and mummified relics.

**Grove of Silence:** Also called the Bleating Grove or the Grove of Bitter Bliss, this forested mountain valley is largely uninhabited by humanoids. The primary



residents are selang, or “dark satyrs” (see *Tome of Beasts*) devoted to the worship of the Goat of the Woods and similar dark gods. The sound of their pipes under the dark branches keeps most woodcutters at bay, and the small shrine on the forest’s one good path is heaped with the hearts of sheep, birds, and other animals. The leader of the selang is a young and cheerful captain of his forest band, deeply fond of the dragonpipe and called the Devourer of Secrets. He visits Galna once each month to lead the revels there, always seeking to ensnare priests or priestesses of Sabateus.





**Kulchiss & the Kulchiss Pass:** A mithral mine has kept some dwarves occupied in this high mountain town where snow is common for eight months of the year and the shepherds and miners yet retain a fierce joy in life. The town is known for its talented musicians as well as for banditry, metalwork, and a devotion to raiding “lowlanders”—the town has always been on the verge of rebellion, and the arrival of its taxes to the autarch seem perpetually in doubt. However, in years where no wealth is forthcoming, the citizens of Kulchiss do not mock or belittle the autarch but merely claim that the “mountain’s share” was given to otherworldly creatures on the peaks of Mount Ashatabar. The Autarch has never mounted a punitive expedition against Kulchiss Pass, though he has been known to be demanding of additional soldiers from Kulchiss to serve in the ranks of his armies.

**Plendress:** Home of the Plendremain family of wizards, sorcerers, and oracles, the family stronghold is a castle built on a large plateau accessible only from the air or through tunnels dug into the rock. They keep a stable of hippogriffs and a small breeding colony of rocs (fed on taxes levied in sheep and goats). Their command of the air and their swift passage from one place to another means many are believed to be servants of Boreas or Azuran.

**Red Fields of Yallomena:** These fields grow poppies in vast swaths, watched carefully by the priests of Veles by day and by a cadre of extremely devout gnoll-ragers of Veles by night. When harvested and distilled into a gummy resin, the resulting tinctures and pipesmoke are found throughout Beldestan in smoker’s dens and thieves’ quarters. The addictive, lethargic, dream-inducing material is commonly referred to as “dragonsmoke” or a “dragonpipe.”



## SATRAPY OF BELDESTAN

**Symbol:** A blue field set with three golden eyes.

**Ruler:** Autarch and Most Puissant Magus of the Darkening Heavens, First Speaker of the Void, Beloved of Veles and Sabateus, King of the Mountains, Keeper of the Stairs, Ozymandrite Alestos the First (NE male human wizard 19).

**Important Personages:** First Counselor Yrsinestra the Wise (LE adult female void dragon); Chamberlain of the Stairs Olessy Plendremain (CE male human wizard 9); Shalena of the Seven Fists (NE female human monk 12); High Eclipse-lord Rugansta Yllomir (LE male human cleric 9 [Chernobog]); Tarpin the Black (LE male darakhul priest 11 [Vardesain]); Khatun Bibi Kaftar, Indigo Heirophant, Beloved of Sabateus (LN female human cleric 15 [Sabateus]).

**Population:** 184,000 humans, 20,500 gnolls, 15,000 dwarves, 5,000 goblins, 4,000 darakhul, 2,000 gnomes.

**Capital:** Galna, population 10,200 (9,000 humans, 700 gnolls, 500 goblins).

**Towns:** Bastun’s Hold, population 8,000 (7,000 humans, 1,000 darakhul, 500 gnolls); Kulchiss, population 6,000 (4,500 human, 1,000 dwarves, 500 gnolls); Ur-Trakhan, population 5,000 (2,000 humans, 3,000 dwarves)

**Great Gods:** Azuran, Goat of the Woods, Sabateus, Vardesain, Veles of the Void

**Trade Goods:** Turquoise, lapis lazuli, iron, mithral, ada, poppy juice and resin, indigo, barley, sheep, goats, carpets (in order of total output)



# THE DELIGHTS OF ENKADA PISHTUHK

By Troy E. Taylor with Ben McFarland

Finding the archmage Enkada Pishtuhk is not the difficult part. Discovering his peculiar desires, however, is fraught with danger and mystery.

Adventurers often make their first inquiry at key locations throughout Midgard, say at a market stall behind the red door in Bemmea, deep within a vault of the Great Library of Friula, or at an open-air booth during Zobeck's midsummer fair.

*"We seek a powerful boon. How can I appease the wizard, Enkada Pishtuhk, the one they call Treachery's Rider?"*

Sometimes the adventurer uses the word "impress," sometimes it's "bargain with," "coerce," or "ingratiate." The question varies, but the reaction is nearly always the same.

The person, be it merchant, sage, or mystic, shudders and winces, squeezing his or her eyes shut at the utterance of the mage's name. They glance furtively aside or tentatively down at their feet, not daring to breathe. Just when they think it's safe to exhale a sigh of relief, they see it, just out of the corner of their eye. The shadow of the mage! Clawed hands rise menacingly from the ethereal form and yellowed eyes dart about, fixed on the identity of the speaker.

*"Appease my master?"* says the shadow in a voice deep like an underground river and smooth like bourbon. *"You must satisfy one of his appetites. They are well-known to folk like this one who barter in information. Then, my master Pishtuhk might entertain with you. Come to Pah'draguushlai in the Wasted West. But don't come empty handed.*

*And mind your manners."*

The shadow evaporates with a menacing laugh.

## An Appetite for the Exotic

Enkada Pishtuhk's tastes in food and fashion are unusual. Offering such is one of the few ways aspiring adventurers might be permitted within the archmage's presence. Here are a few.

**Jellied Eyeballs of Bemmea:** Fishing boats venturing into the vast Western Ocean often return to Bemmea with tuna whose eyeballs are boiled for the discerning diner. The wizard always accepts tuna eyeballs, but he prefers those of goblin sharks (see *Midgard Bestiary*) instead. The aquatic shark-shaped goblins hunt among the ruins of the sunken Arcane Armada in the shallows off Bemmea. Taking the eyeballs while they are in shark form is best.

To truly tempt Enkada, adventurers might gift him with a lesser wizard's oculo swarm (see *Tome of Beasts*). Bemmean wizards employ these creatures as truth detectors during intense negotiations. Enkada, however, relishes the thought of depriving another, lesser wizard of their eyeball servants, especially when it is served on a platter with noodles.

**Scented Cones of the Southlands:** It is the fashion of high-born lords and ladies of Nuria Natal in the Southlands to adorn themselves with scented cones of wax or resin—as they melt in the tropical clime,

they emit a pleasing fragrance. As both wizard and alchemist, the making of scented cones is no secret to Enkada.

But having cones that are filled with the heady scents of the river kingdom are prized. Most of all, though, Enkada wants those crafted by priests of Bastet, the Queen of Perfumes, for they carry the pleasing and unique fragrance of wild desert flowers. While Enkada doesn't intend to wear them as a deodorant, the cones can be employed as air fresheners in his sanctuary, to counteract the ancient and otherworldly mold-like stench of the Walker.

The cones can be obtained from any market in Per-Bastet's Perfume District. The trick is transporting them all the way into the Wasted West without them melting.

Strangely, Enkada cares nothing for the perfumes of Bourgund, which is closer and would be easier to obtain. In fact, he will outright refuse any perfumes that are manufactured there. Nor does he want a magical effect mimicking the scent. The wizard believes the authentic cones superior to any magic, and thus far, he has been able to spot forgeries.

**Triolo's Twin Offerings:** Enkada's links to the shore city of Triolo are shrouded in a shadowy past, but there is no denying his affection for two of its particular attractions.

In the Quays district, they proudly proclaim they don't keep goats nor do they make goat cheese, like their rivals in Savoyne. Rather, they take Savoyne cheese and make it better. The cheese is imported from Gold Coast ports or from merchant trains that cross the highlands that bisect the peninsula. The process is not for the fainthearted, however. The cheese is laid out so that flies will lay their eggs upon it. In time, those maggots will make it their home, secreting fats and oils and fermenting the cheese until it gains its distinctive flavor.

And from the Spider's Shrine of Archae are "fate scarves" woven of the finest spider's silk. These items, embroidered with the words of a foretelling are made especially for Enkada as if there were a spiritual connection between the priestess of the spinning goddess Ariadne and the renegade wizard. Strangely, the silk scarves will be bundled for transport when adventurers arrive as if they were expected.

**Lorebooks of the Elves and the Elfmarked:**

For reasons unknown, Enkada is ravenous for lorebooks of history and magic concerning Elfheim, the Archon's Court, and the lands governed by the Grand Duchy of Dornig. He also is fascinated by songbooks, the few that exist, from the elfmarked lands. Not surprisingly, the inward-looking inhabitants of Dornig follow the imperatrix's example and jealously guard such repositories of knowledge and are loathe to see them leave the duchy. Any such items smuggled out are viewed by Enkada with a deep appreciation.

He has no qualms about copies made in his presence by those willing to risk staying in a remote, isolated cavern scriptorium hidden deep in the Wastes. Such supplicants are responsible for their own food and drink while copying the texts and must submit to magical geas ensuring their true and accurate transcription. They are also responsible for returning the originals, which may carry its own risks. He prefers to keep the originals as they occasionally contain hidden messages or elements.

**Honey Mead of Bjeornshafen:** Enkada rarely partakes in strong drink, but he finds the honey mead of the Bear Kingdom agreeable to his palate. Though many trade routes lead to the city ruled by the werebear druid Yohana Honeyhair, the journey across the North Sea can be treacherous and time-consuming. Despite its reputation as an excellent portage ale, keeping the mead

from spoiling during a journey across the Wastes still requires some inventiveness on the part of the adventurers as it is quite sensitive to heat and extraplanar storage gives it a spoiled flavor. Adventurers will know if Enkada finds the gift to his liking should he offer a round to all in attendance.

**House Kot:** Enkada would not be satisfied with a simple house cat as a pet. But getting a kot bayun would fulfill many longstanding desires beyond companionship.

Obtaining a kot bayun from the Arbonesse or Tomierran forests well-versed in elven folk poems and fey-inspired epics would exceed even Enkada's expectations, perhaps aiding his research into elf lore. In this case, he might even express a feeling of indebtedness to the aspiring adventurers. Enkada's inscrutable nature rivals even Baba Yaga and makes it difficult to know whether his sincerity is genuine, though.

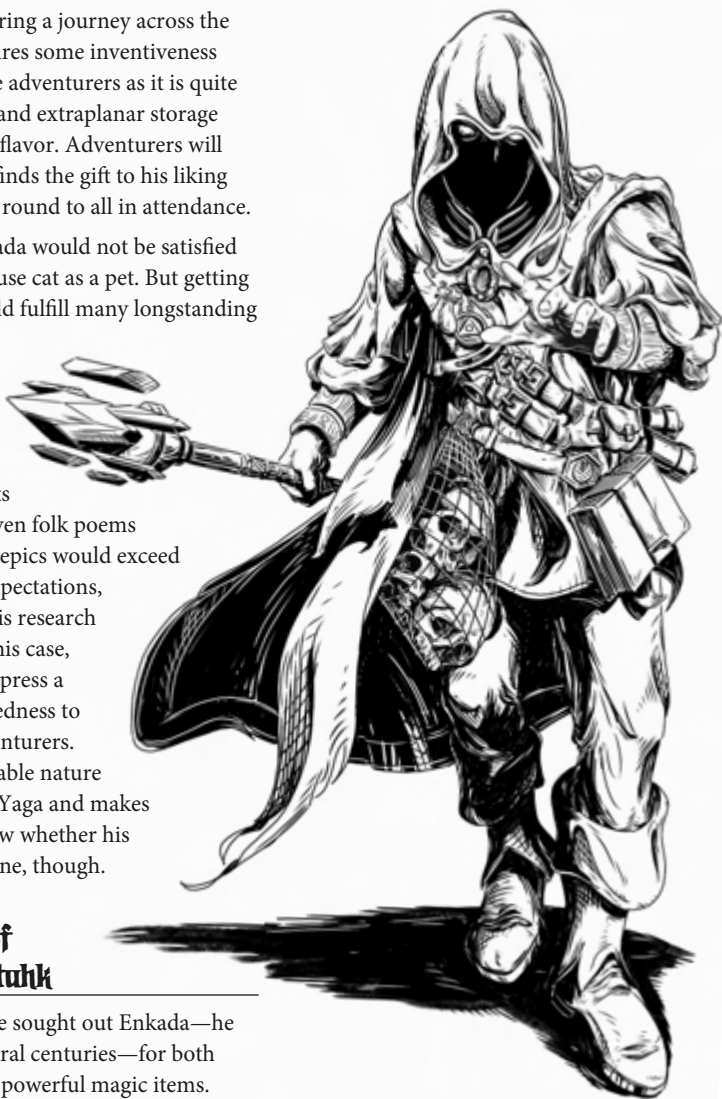
## The Boons of Enkada Pishtuhk

Adventurers have sought out Enkada—he has lived for several centuries—for both information and powerful magic items. Even if most of his time upon Midgard has been spent as a pariah in the aftermath of the Great Mage Wars, there is no denying his intelligence, arcane power, and command of ancient lore.

Only a few items are actually kept in Enkada's sanctuary. Most are stored in caches across the Wasted West. Even obtaining them with Enkada's blessing might entail some risk as he seldom

remembers to mention where he placed particular wards, traps, and monstrous guardians to protect the items.

For those seeking particular answers, locations, or other intangible benefits, Enkada often provides very precise answers, which leave out details or answer the very letter of the question. This can be frustrating, but he is willing to entertain





multiple questions if the gift is sufficient and often allows a single exception to a particularly polite solicitor.

- 1 Poison: Midnight Tears
- 2 Poison: Wyvern
- 3 Poison: Purple worm
- 4 Periapt of Health
- 5 Portable Hole
- 6 Arrow of Slaying
- 7 Wand of Web
- 8 Wand of Wonder
- 9 Cloak of Arachnida
- 10 Gloves of Missile Snaring
- 11 Ring of Free Action
- 12 Slippers of Spider Climbing
- 13 Shield of Missile Attraction
- 14 Decanter of endless water
- 15 Scroll of Guards and Wards
- 16 Scroll of Web
- 17 Rod of Alertness
- 18 Periapt of Proof against Poison
- 19 Figurine of Wondrous Power  
(Marble Elephant)
- 20 Staff of the Magi

## Sanctuary of Expectations

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Few know the true form of Enkada's sanctuary that hangs from the Walker, save for the most powerful wizards capable of piercing the veil of his illusions.

Despite his intimidating magical shadow and his reputation for treachery, the part of his personality that demands proper etiquette requires him to prepare his sanctuary for visitors. That means crafting an appearance that matches their expectations or at least satisfies his obligation as host to offer a space visually pleasing and welcoming.

Adventurers variously describe the cozy cluttered laboratory one might expect of an archmage, a starkly clean (antiseptic even) room of white with sharp lines, a hammock constructed of spidery webbing stretching out in all directions from a central throne in the center, a library of shelves stuffed full of books extending out beyond the range of vision and far larger on the inside than it could possibly be, to even a rickety treehouse of a structure of thin slatted boards adorned with luxury items from across Midgard that creaks, sags, and shifts in the winds of the waste.

Through the veil of illusion there might be hints, however, to the distasteful, even ominous, aspects of the actual surroundings. Is that curtain cord a webbing strand of some aspect of Pah'draguushlai? Is that soft cushion somehow pulsing and throbbing as if it were alive? Are those sparkling, magical motes actually a swarm of red-banded line spiders skittering across the room (see *Tome of Beasts*)? That frigid yet invisible caress that brought about a deep sense of mindbending unease—was it a figment of your imagination or were the tendrils of a voidling hovering hungrily nearby (see *Tome of Beasts*)?

Regardless, meeting Enkada comes with its own share of anxieties and nervous moments. Yet as a stickler for good manners, his diction is perfect and his own actions impeccable.

*“Now, what can I tempt you with, my good friends? Wine? Tea? Perhaps a nice cup of cool crystal water from this decanter? Be at ease . . .”*

He pauses and offers a half-smile, a knowing expression with a hint of menace behind it.

*“And tell me what brings you to my sanctuary in the waste.”*



# LEGACY OF THE UNHINGED GARDENERS

By Richard Green

*“Nine days into the trip upriver, I could tell we were getting close to our destination. The vegetation along both banks grew more and more dense and . . . odd. The trees soared high into the sky, their branches overgrown with great tangles of vines, orchids, and bromeliads. Beneath the towering giants grew strange plants with unwholesomely large flowers in a variety of sickly colors that gave off an overpowering, almost intoxicating, perfume. On the tenth day, I caught a glimpse of something glinting in the sunlight through the trees. Slashing our way through the dense foliage, we could see ancient, marble paving stones here and there amidst the undergrowth and came across enormous basalt troughs, overflowing with plant life. Ahead was the source of the glinting—an enormous glasshouse filled with unfamiliar plants bearing pendulous, bloated fruits of virulent purple. We had arrived in the fabled Gardens of Carnessa . . .”*

—Tavareen Windrider, *Marvels and Curiosities of the Wasted West: An Almanack*

Several hundred years ago, a group of Sages from the now-vanished Empire of Caelmarath came south to the peninsula beyond the lands of the giants. Here, they built the splendid and magical Gardens of Carnessa: a wondrous place filled with fountains, pergolas, gazebos, summer houses, and all manner of exotic plant specimens that flourished in the region’s warm and humid climate. The wizards conducted dozens of botanical experiments to enrich and add color to the gardens, which scholars believe were intended as a summer retreat for Caelmarath’s wealthiest elite. Whether or not that is true, things took a dark turn when the archmage Melgrys the Etiolated, leader of the cabal, ordered his apprentices to cross-breed their creations with rare specimens harvested from the jungles of Kled and Chag-Hai, alien places located in the Realms Beyond. An obscure volume held in the libraries of the Academies Arcana suggests that Melgrys fell under the influence of “disturbing insect-like creatures from beyond time and space” and that these malevolent beings began to direct the archmage’s botanical research.

Melgrys and the other wizards started creating a plant army to defeat Caelmarath’s enemies, but this bold new strategy was to lead to their downfall. Many of their newly created plant specimens were intelligent, aggressive, mobile, and resistant to magic, and they proved unwilling to remain confined to the glasshouses. The deadly mutant plants broke free and turned on their creators, seizing control of the gardens before spreading throughout the jungles of the peninsula.

## Exploring the Gardens

Despite the remote location, the sweltering jungle heat, and the dangerous inhabitants, bold explorers and curious arcane scholars still travel to the ruined gardens to uncover their lost secrets. It’s hard to determine where the gardens stop and the jungle begins, but the ruined structures built by the mages are spread over three hundred acres. Some of the most important features are described below.

**Basalt Planters:** These thirty-foot-long planters are scattered throughout the

## WARLOCK'S TRUMPETBLOOM

*Large plant, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 171 (18d10 +72)

**Speed** 20 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

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**Saving Throws** Str +7, Con +7

**Skills** Stealth +3, Perception +3

**Damage Resistances** fire

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities**

blinded, deafened,  
exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft.;  
passive Perception 13

**Languages** None, but  
understand Void Speech

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

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**Alien Mind** If a character casts *speak with plants* to communicate with a trumpetbloom, he or she must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of the trumpetbloom for one minute.

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

### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack.** The trumpetbloom makes a stinger attack and two tendril attacks.



gardens. Constructed from grey volcanic rock, they were used to grow new specimens and are overflowing with alien-looking plants. If the PCs come too close to a planter, roll a d4 and consult the table on the next page.

The plants can repeat their attacks on subsequent rounds (initiative 10) and can be attacked by the PCs—treat them as objects with AC 9, 30 hp, vulnerable to fire, and resistant to piercing damage. Disturbing the planters is likely to draw the attention of other inhabitants of the gardens. These include warlock's trumpetblooms, shambling mounds, awakened shrubs and trees, violet fungi, and other plant monsters.

**Dread Gazebo:** situated on top of a small hill, this white marble ornamental building is fifty feet in diameter with a domed roof. Octagonal in shape and open on four sides, it was designed to take advantage of the magnificent views across the gardens in their heyday. Now, it is home to a large warlock's trumpetbloom with maximum hit points. PCs searching the gazebo can find a leatherbound journal wrapped in oilcloth with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. This belonged to one of the mages and contains copious notes on their botanical experiments as well as cryptic instructions on how to activate the portal in the Great Glasshouse.

*continued next page*

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**Stinger.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d12 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for one minute. The poisoned target is paralyzed, and it can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

**Tendrils.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 15).

*This plant creature looks like something from a disquieting dream. Standing over ten feet tall, it has a long slender stem that grows out of the thick mass of tangled roots that it uses to shuffle forward. Its stem is topped with a huge trumpet-like orange flower while two twisting tendrils grow from its base, just above the root ball. A wicked-looking stinger, glistening with venom, flicks out of its "mouth" on the end of a whip-like tongue. The trumpetbloom clacks and croaks ominously as it advances.*

Warlock's trumpetblooms were created in the Gardens of Carnessa by Melgrys

and his cabal through a series of bizarre experiments that involved cross-breeding native jungle orchids and giant carnivorous plants with alien seed pods harvested in the jungles of Kled. Melgrys supervised the experiments personally, frequently consulting a living brain he kept in a glass cylinder. When the first trumpetblooms were propagated from seedlings, the mages were astounded at how quickly they grew and subsequently reproduced. An unstoppable army to fight for Carnessa in the Mage Wars was within their grasp, they believed. Their optimism proved misguided as the trumpetblooms broke free of the glasshouses and attacked their masters.

Warlock's trumpetblooms are aggressive and intelligent plant creatures that seek to spread their seed pods throughout the jungles of Carnessa (and beyond if they can find a way to break through or bypass the giants' Wall). Trumpetblooms are carnivores, feeding on the small deer, giant insects, and snakes that live in the jungle, but they will happily devour humanoid flesh when available, using their roots to soak up the nutrients from a decomposing corpse.

**Great Glasshouse:** Constructed from magical glass as tough as steel and magically treated iron, this ornate greenhouse is the biggest structure in the gardens. Measuring two hundred feet by seventy-five feet, the glasshouse has a curved roof reaching fifty feet in height. The wizards grew their most unusual and dangerous specimens in this large building.

Today, the spells that reinforced the glass and prevented the metal framework from rusting have long since faded and the glasshouse has fallen into disrepair. Most of the glass is gone, and the rusty iron skeleton is overgrown with vines and creepers. Thick plant growth chokes much of the interior—PCs wishing to enter must spend four feet of movement for every one foot they move. In the center of the building where the plant growth is less dense, explorers can uncover the circle of tarnished silver runes inlaid into the stone floor where the mages opened a portal to the Realms Beyond.

**Summer Palace:** Once an impressive marble building where Melgrys and his wizards lived and worked, this structure is overgrown with unnatural vegetation. Vine-choked trees bearing pale, poisonous-looking fruits have grown inside the courtyard, causing great cracks in the palace walls. Their roots have splintered the paving slabs, and a colony of giant ants (see *Tome of Beasts*) has made its home in the earth beneath.

If the PCs can get past the insects, they may encounter Vos-Trobarr, a ravenala (see *Tome of Beasts*) who lives in the ruined great hall. This twenty-foot-tall anthropomorphic palm tree serves as the self-styled Chief Gardener. Vos-Trobarr seeks to minimize the spread of alien plant life in the jungles at the expense of indigenous, natural plants and trees. He is concerned by tales of the so-called “Emerald Walker” (see *Midgard Campaign Setting*) and will urge the PCs to uncover whatever they can about this newly-discovered alien threat.

#### D4 EFFECT

- 1 A hail of thorns is unleashed from the plants, raining down in a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on a point within 30 feet. Each creature caught in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) piercing damage on a failed saving throw or half damage on a success.
- 2 The plants spray a cloud of deadly spores in a 30-foot cone, emanating from the planter. Each creature caught in the cloud must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, targets take 10 (3d6) poison damage and become poisoned for one hour; on a success, they take half damage and are not poisoned.
- 3 Long, vine-like tendrils covered in vicious thorns lash out from the planter. The tendrils make one attack on each PC within 30 feet with a +7 bonus, inflicting 2d10 piercing damage on a successful hit.
- 4 As a roll of 3, but the tendrils are sticky and inflict no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, 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. Each round, grappled creatures are pulled 20 feet closer to the planter. A creature pulled into the planter takes 10 (3d6) acid damage and is engulfed (escape DC 15). Engulfed creatures take 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of their turns, are restrained, and cannot breathe.

# VOID-TOUCHED: WARPED FLESH AND TWISTED MINDS

By Dan Dillon

Forgotten voices whisper from places darker than deepest Shadow, promising power. Moldering tomes, covered in script whose very letters and sigils cause gorge to rise and stone to rot, hold secrets lost to the sane world. The Void lingers just out of reach but ever seeking entry. It is the space between planes, emptiness leftover from when the multiverse came into being: a place of living non-existence. It is the nothing whose contrast gives meaning to the whole of creation. Its existence and the nightmarish creatures spawned by it are a mindbending enigma, the answer to which eludes the most learned sages. In truth, the sane mortal mind is incapable of fully fathoming the Void—which is why those who study its depths are all quite mad.

The Void offers power and knowledge, for it touches all places and times, but everything it offers comes with a price. The desperate or foolhardy often agree to its terms without understanding what it is they do. Other beings of great power begin their study secure in the belief that their might will save them. The greatest of these are the void dragons of Midgard who soar in the darkness between stars. There in the cold sidereal emptiness, the Void grows close. The void dragons slipped past the nihil-boundary in the dark reaches of space and gazed long and deep into the Void. Even they are irrevocably broken and carry the Void's touch with them into the world.

Even some creatures spawned of the world and planes known to mortals carry a touch of the Void within them, like a splinter in the soul. Many aberrations are so touched,

their bizarre habits, nightmarish physical forms, and utterly alien mindsets giving terrifying testament to the corruptive influence. Aboleths, in particular, long ago snatched secrets from it and included aspects of Void Speech into their strange glyph language. These symbols corrupt and twist the very stone into which they are carved and taint the natural world in their vicinity. Void energies similarly reach out to many undead creatures, finding resonance and purchase within the antithesis of life that necrotic energy and undeath represent. Places where undead and aberrations dwell in numbers or where they often spawn can sometimes bear flaws in the walls of reality—areas that have worn thin between *what is* and *what is not*.

## Touch of the Void

The Void exists outside the realm of sanity and form. Creatures exist there, spawned by unknown powers and processes, who constantly seek entry into the living, physical world. More than that, the Void itself seems almost alive or at least under some constant pressure to spread and expand—to consume. Creatures who taste its power expose themselves to its touch, and that touch is corruptive. It bears a taint that seeps into physical, spiritual, and mental being. Void magic is powerful and often destructive, its spells reinforced with the blasphemous intonations of Void Speech, and it is the most common way for mortals, particularly adventurers, to have their first brush with the Void's taint. Lore and knowledge gathered from tainted

sources or the mindbending unreality of the Void itself seep into a creature's mind and soul. Even some places become spiritually toxic if the barrier to the existing world wears thin or breaks.

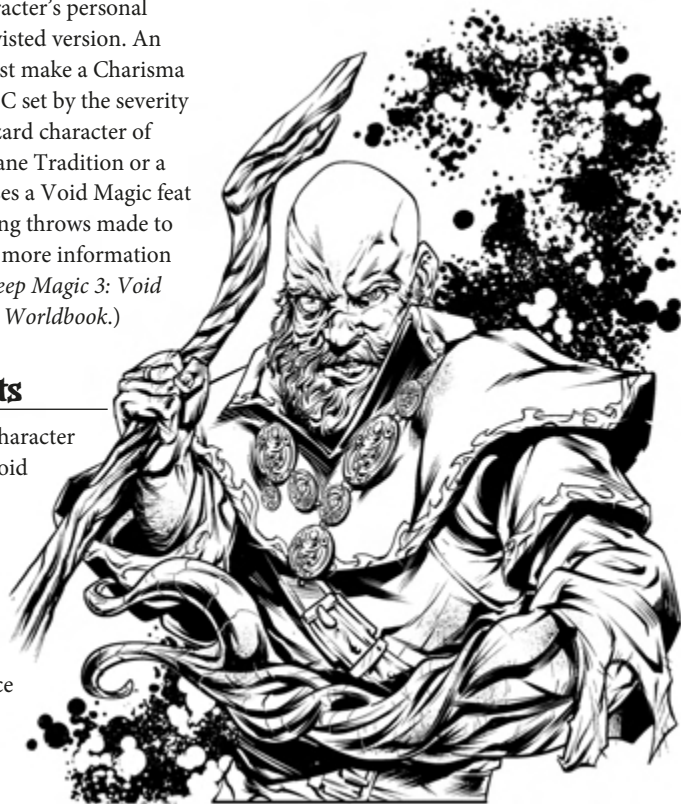
Whenever a character is exposed to Void taint, it risks losing a small piece of itself to that influence. The Void attacks the very reality of the exposed character, overwriting a fragment of the character's personal reality with its own twisted version. An exposed character must make a Charisma saving throw with a DC set by the severity of the exposure. A wizard character of the Void Speaker Arcane Tradition or a character who possesses a Void Magic feat has advantage on saving throws made to resist Void taint. (For more information on Void Magic, see *Deep Magic 3: Void Magic* or the *Midgard Worldbook*.)

## Void Taint Effects

On a failed save, the character suffers one point of Void taint and is afflicted with **short-term madness** (see the 5E SRD). On a success, the character might still be shaken or upset by the experience but suffers no ill

effects. Once a character has succeeded on a saving throw against a particular type of Void exposure, it is unaffected by further exposures of the same type until it finishes a long rest.

Void taint is a cumulative measure of the Void's influence and corruption of a creature. When the character's Void taint reaches a threshold equal to its proficiency



### VOID EXPOSURE

### CHARISMA SAVE DC

Finishes a rest within a Void-tainted area	10
Learns Void-tainted lore	10
Attunes a Void-tainted magic item	15
Learns a Void magic spell	10 + spell level
Subjected to a Void magic spell of 6th level or higher	Caster's spell save DC
Encounters a creature of the Void for the first time	10 + creature's Charisma modifier
Exposed to the Void itself	20



bonus + its Charisma modifier (minimum of 1), it is afflicted with **indefinite madness**, and its Void taint resets to zero. If a character has any Void Magic feats, it can add the number of Void Magic feats it possesses to its maximum threshold of Void taint. A Void Speaker wizard doubles its total Void taint threshold. Accumulated Void taint is permanent until the creature reaches its threshold.

Sometimes, the Void's touch manifests in a physical fashion, rather than a spiritual or mental one. Characters can maintain their sanity by containing their growing Void taint within their own bodies. Such a measure isn't without cost as the sliver of the Void works its way into the character's flesh and changes it in ways ranging from subtle to terrifying. A character who uses this option isn't afflicted by indefinite madness but instead suffers a **flesh warp**.

A flesh warp is a physical deformity that immediately overtakes the character's body. Flesh warps are unsettling things and impose disadvantage on Charisma checks for any purpose other than intimidation made against a creature not of the Void. A flesh warp lasts until cured.

## Curing Flesh Warps and Void Taint

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A *greater restoration* spell cast on a character with Void taint removes one point of taint in addition to the spell's normal effects if the target of the spell succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. Flesh warps are permanent manifestations of the Void within the body of a tainted character and are incredibly difficult to remove. A *regeneration* spell or more powerful magic is required to rid a character of a flesh warp.

## NEW INDEFINITE MADNESS

### D10 FLAW (LASTS UNTIL CURED)

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | "I am obsessed with discovering the hidden meaning in seemingly random objects, such as shards of smashed glass."                  |
| 2  | "Some event in my life never happened. I won't acknowledge it or anything to do with it."  |
| 3  | "I can hear them whispering, always whispering. They're loudest near corners of rooms and other angles in structures."             |
| 4  | "I constantly scrawl a certain set of strange glyphs without realizing it, sometimes even so far as to cut them into my own skin." |
| 5  | "When I'm excited or upset, some of my words come out in a different language. One that I don't actually speak or understand."     |
| 6  | "The trappings and symbol of a certain deity cause me great pain to look upon or touch."   |
| 7  | "Ordered collections of objects are fascinating, and I have to study and count them."  |
| 8  | "I collect strange or disgusting trinkets, such as teeth of creatures I kill or scrapings of dirt from everywhere I sleep."        |
| 9  | "The music is always with me, and I have to let it out. It doesn't matter that no one else finds the song as beautiful as I do."   |
| 10 | "I hear scratching just on the other side of interior walls."  |

## FLESH WARPS

### D10 EFFECT (LASTS UNTIL CURED)

- 1 **Bulging Eye.** The character has disadvantage on ranged attacks made against targets farther than 30 ft. away but can take the Search action as a bonus action.

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- 2 **Eyeless.** The character permanently gains the blinded condition. This condition can't be removed without curing this flesh warp. The character's other senses are enhanced by the Void, granting blindsight to a range of 10 ft. as long as the character can hear.

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- 3 **Gleaming Skin.** The gleam grants advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to locate the character by sight. While the character is in bright light and is hit by a melee attack, it can use its reaction to add 1 to its armor class if the attacker can see its skin.

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- 4 **Scales.** The character's skin grows scales, bony plates, or becomes thick and leathery, granting an armor class of 14 + Dexterity modifier. The character's skin is also less pliant and numb and imposes disadvantage on Dexterity checks.

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- 5 **Slime.** The character's skin produces a slick, gelatinous oil that provides advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to avoid or escape a grapple or slip out of bonds, and it allows the creature to pass through spaces large enough for a creature one size smaller than itself without squeezing. The slime trail grants advantage on checks made to track the character.

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- 6 **Stench.** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 ft. of the character must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. This stink clings to any objects that have been in the character's possession for 24 hours. Attempting to sell any such object may be impossible or yields only half the normal price at best. Food in the character's possession spoils after 24 hours.

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- 7 **Talons.** The character can use the talons to make unarmed strikes that deal 1d4 plus Strength modifier slashing damage. The character has disadvantage on Dexterity checks involving fine manipulation with its hands and can't wear close-toed footwear.

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- 8 **Tentacles.** One of the character's hands twists into a nest of writhing tentacles. Any check or saving throw made to maintain grip or grapple with the tentacles has advantage. Any check or saving throw involving fine motor control or Dexterity using the tentacles has disadvantage.

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- 9 **Tusks.** The character grows large tusks and can use them to make unarmed strikes that deal 1d4 plus Strength modifier piercing damage. If the character casts a spell with a verbal component that has a casting time longer than 1 round, they must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw to successfully cast the spell.

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- 10 **Twisted Teeth.** Mouths grow on random parts of the character's body. If the character is grappling a creature at the start of its turn, the teeth deal 1d4 piercing damage to the grappled creature. While the character wears medium or heavy armor or heavy clothing, the teeth ache and grind against the armor, causing disadvantage on Wisdom checks due to discomfort and distraction.

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