

WARLOCK GRIMMIRE II



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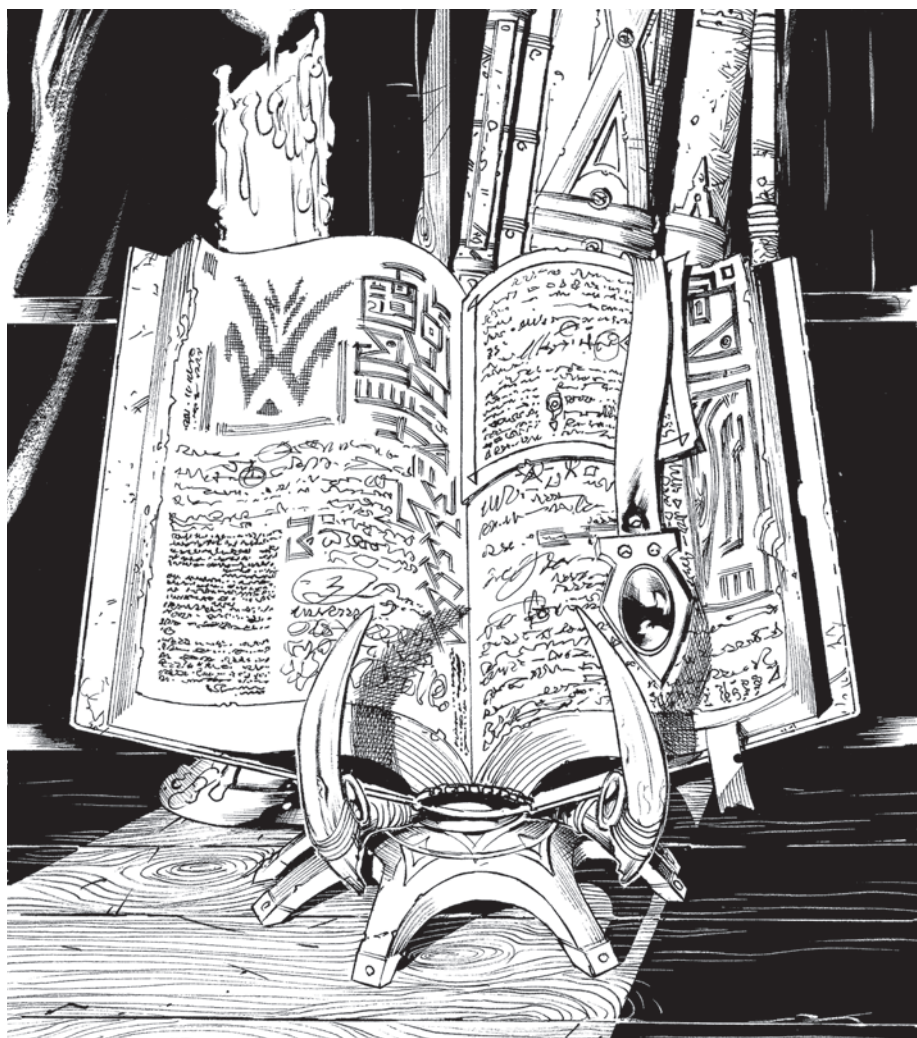


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TOURING THE LANDS FANTASTIC

by Scott Gable

Need details on the Eleven Hells and their shadowy bordertown of Smoke? Or on the mysterious destruction of Iram and its strange legacy? Or even on Baba Yaga's hut itself?

Maybe it's monsters you're after. Consider a range of unique boss beasts to end any adventure, or a taste of the cruel and nasty from the Blood Kingdom. Perhaps you need a fully statted and highly motivated NPC to fill out your game.

Or it may be the player's side of things you're craving: New spells and firearms, airships and vril-powered skiffs, clockwork devices and new equipment? New subclasses? And oh, so much rich detail on the halflings!

Dear reader, you can have it all!

The kobolds were supremely busy this past year on the Warlock Patreon! It's easy to forget what we've done when we're so focused on pushing ahead with each new *Warlock*, but then we get to the *Warlock Grimoire*, and... it feels so good! All those magical places we've visited collected in one slick hardcover. (It's gonna look so good on the shelf next to the first one!)

We could have simply laid out all the issues back to back, but the *Warlock Grimoires* are a bit more useful than that. All the articles are re-sorted from their sequencing to fit better

into categories, combining like elements. You can start with **Lore and Storytelling** and then ease right into **Adventure and Dungeoneering**: these are where you'll find the deepest currents of Midgard history and recent events, as well as the lore of its various planes and locations of interest. Then it's off to the crunchier bits of **Monsters, NPCs, Magic, and Player** options. We didn't want to break up individual articles, but this—along with the index—brings a whole new level of utility to the book and offers a way to get more out of the content even if you already have the individual *Warlocks*.

We've collected here everything from *Warlock 11* to *Warlock 19*, all the thrilling words, including any errata, and all the glorious illustrations—plus entirely new material never seen before! Just look at those credits, see those names that you've come to know so well and those new rising talents, and you just know you're holding something special. We're proud to present *Warlock Grimoire 2*, a trove of the dark and fantastical.

Yrs on the Dark Side,

Scott Gable
Editor, Kobold Press



LORE AND STORYTELLING

THE BURNISHED GROVE: RAVA'S CLOCKWORK FOREST

by Sarah Madsen

The Plane of Gears sprawled before her. The cog she stood on was a shining expanse of metal against a heat-shimmering sky, a blank ingot ready to be hammered, twisted, and formed. She smiled at the possibilities within such unmarred terrain. She hadn't known before what this bare swath would be, but now, it could only ever have been set here for this purpose. Her work was never done, and that suited her ... there was so much left to do. This wonderful, winding, weaving world was vast and perfect, everything just where it needed to be—but with potential for so much more. She reveled in her industry and productivity.

Shaking her head, she admonished herself with a laugh that chimed and tinkled like a music box. Here she was, caught out daydreaming when there was work to be done. One last glance at the sky where the filaments of fate wound in an elaborate and precise weave that only she could see, and with a long, deep breath, she began.

The filaments overhead shuddered and reformed as she held her staff before her like a noon-facing hand and placed one foot in front of the other. She went slowly at first, carefully, but gained speed with each step until she twirled in a graceful dance across the metallic plain. Each footstep left behind a molten mark pressed into the ground, a seed sewn on the surface of this yet-unnamed space. Her skirts became a kaleidoscope of shifting color

around her ankles as she swirled deasil for miles and miles and miles, sometimes nearly vanishing from view across the distant horizon before returning in a wide, sweeping arc, each circuit just ever so much smaller than the last. Her staff twirled within her six hands, its tip carving intricate trails over her head, causing the filaments to whirl and eddy in response.

Her spiraling dance finally brought her to the center of the coil. Her feet stilled. Her breath heaved. When she lifted her head, a glowing gyre surrounded her, etched from her footsteps into the very ground around her, waiting.

With a sharp cry of victory, she brought her staff down into the heart of the gleaming whorl.

A flash of light split the sky. A great, thunderous grinding echoed across the vast plain. The staff, which a moment before was a simple rod of burnished metal, sprouted branches and expanded until it no longer fit within her hands. She turned and strolled through the forest as it sprang up around her with a flourish of leaves and a cacophony of chimes that reverberated from discordancy into perfect harmony. The ground beneath her feet shook as roots burrowed and tunnels bored themselves into existence. Here and there, she reached out a hand, plucked a sprouting bud from a branch, and blew breath into it, and where she dropped it, a clockwork creature unfolded from the petals and slunk away into the trees.

At the edge of the spiral, a group of druids and tinkerers—halflings and elves and gearforged alike—had already gathered, called there by an unknown voice that spoke to them in their dreams. She smiled at them, she who was the source of that calling, and though they were afraid, they did not flee.

“Care for it,” she said to them, her gentle voice a bare whisper across their consciousness. “Tend to the trees and the creatures within. Cultivate the Mainspring, help it bear its fruit. Do not let it come to harm, for it is vital to all.”

They nodded and turned to regard her newest creation: the Burnished Grove, a clockwork forest unlike anything they’d ever known.

The Clockwork Forest

Rava. Ariadne. The Gear Goddess. The Clockwork Oracle. Mother of Industry, Spinner of Fate, Merchant Goddess, Patron of the City of Zobeck, Patron of Weavers and the Gearforged... whatever the mask, hers is the Plane of Gears, an endlessly turning demesne of cogs and metal. Here, on a field of brass far from any civilization, lies the Burnished Grove. From a distance, the sprawling copse of trees seems an organic anomaly within this strange land of steam and machinery. But on closer inspection, the true nature of this forest is revealed: every tree, bush, leaf, and blossom are composed of hammered metal and inexorably turning clockwork.

The mechanical nature of the Burnished Grove often lulls adventurers into thinking the forest is benign and peaceful. But this is a forest like any other, and creatures live within the underbrush—but rather than beasts of flesh and blood, everything within the Burnished Grove, both flora *and* fauna, is a product of Rava and therefor built from clockwork. Beasts of metal stalk the shadows... birds composed entirely of feather-thin layers of silver and brass flit from branch to branch, chiming out their bell-like songs... even insects, wrought from impossibly tiny

clockwork, crawl through the underbrush in the Burnished Grove.

The intricacy of the construction and the strange, pseudo-organic facade fascinates metalworkers, artificers, and tinkerers alike, but it also draws those who are more nature-oriented (such as elves, druids, and rangers) to its borders in order to study its strange, contradictory nature. Occasionally single-minded craftsmen can be found lingering on the outskirts of the grove, hoping to glean its secrets—or hoping to earn the favor of the druids who tend to the forest. The wisest of these craftsmen will hire mercenaries or adventurers as an escort to protect them from the clockwork creatures that inhabit the grove, to negotiate with the druids on their behalf, or even to steal specimens for them to examine in a safer environment.

Covering roughly 10,000 acres, the forest and its clockwork denizens are a marvel to behold. Trees are the primary structure found here, most topping out between fifty and one hundred feet. Some are metallic simulacra of trees found on the material plane—pines of green-tarnished copper, birches of silver, old oaks of deep brass—but some are unique to the grove and not seen anywhere but within its borders. Vines of intricate links of flexible metal wind across the forest floor and up tree trunks, and underbrush of delicate foil chime in the light breeze and at the passing of adventurers’ feet. In the center of the grove stands the heart of the forest: the Mainspring, a gargantuan tree that towers over the rest of the metallic foliage.

A constant, low thrumming and rhythmic thumping can be faintly heard throughout the grove, the sound of unseen machinery working away at some enigmatic process. The temperature within the grove is strangely mild; though steam escapes through vents within the trees, hinting at some greater industry occurring below, the environment is temperate and oddly comfortable to most creatures, even cooling in the evenings and

warming around noon. The area follows through day and night in a perfectly even twelve-hour cycle: four hours of dawn, eight hours of day, four hours of dusk, and eight hours of night. Varying weather and seasons are the only things that appear absent here—the trees are always in bloom, and the temperature remains within a consistent range. Rain never falls, nor does snow, and clouds never mar the copper-colored sky.

THE DRUIDS OF THE BURNISHED GROVE

The Burnished Grove is tended to by a community of druids who have devoted themselves to the care of this mechanical forest. Many of them follow the clockwork Circle of the Evergyre (detailed below), a strange path that blends the reverence of both nature and machine. On the surface, the idea of a clockwork druid may seem irreconcilable—since druids typically shun all things metal and man-made, how could one devoted to the artificial, unbending constancy of a machine also be in tune with the raw chaos of the natural world? But those who feel the movement of the tides, watch the path of the stars across the sky, witness the phases of the moon, and observe the cycle of birth and death and rebirth recognize that the world is rhythmic and reliable in its existence. Worlds turn; a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly who lays an egg that hatches a caterpillar; the seasons progress without interruption... the physical world itself is a great machine, persisting throughout the aeons.

Natural disasters on the material plane are seen as the hand of Rava, the Spinner of Fate herself, reshaping the construction of the world so that it might function more fluidly—or as intrusions by a malevolent, chaotic force attempting to disrupt the delicate cycle. This does not mean that the druids of the Burnished Grove are content to watch events pass without involvement; they work tirelessly to maintain the order

of the grove, and those druids that leave the clockwork forest put the same care and effort into cultivating those they think are vital to the order and cycle of the world. Just as it's nearly impossible to detect the rotation of the earth from its surface, it's equally impossible to see the pattern of the weave from within, and few druids of the Burnished Grove claim to know what mysteries the Spinner of Fate keeps. They are ever vigilant for those who would work against the order of the natural world, those bent on destroying that which is not theirs to destroy.

The druids of the Burnished Grove work their way through the forest in a daily cycle, repairing each plant and tending to the creatures within a very specific routine: while the plants blossom and sprout almost magically, they are still machines that need constant attention in order to remain operable. Some druids occasionally venture out of the grove for necessary supplies—or for their own adventures—but they outsource what jobs they can in order to stay within the bounds of the forest where their attention is needed most.

The druids of the Burnished Grove adhere to a strict hierarchy. The youngest members tend to the forest floor and peripheral plants, making minor repairs and working as sentries at the forest edge. Those of middling reputation handle the larger repairs to the forest and its clockwork beasts and work in the subterranean levels known as the Verge and the Marrowforge. Only the archdruid herself and her cohort of five (known as the Spindles) tend to the Mainspring. Any others who attempt to enter the heart tree will find an unpleasant welcome awaiting them.

ARCHDRUID LANAI AYNWYN *LN female elf druid 19*

An ancient elf with copper hair and deep brown skin coated with freckles, Archdruid Lanai has tended to the Burnished Grove for several centuries. She follows the Circle of

the Evergyre, and some even speculate that she developed the path herself. Her time on the Material Plane is a mystery to most as she no longer speaks of her life before her stewardship of the grove, and none remain that knew her in her early years within the Plane of Gears. Now, she governs the druids of the grove, taking on the responsibility of the clockwork forest and the leadership of those beneath her. Strict but fair, she is calm in demeanor, serene and constant in all things, and does not brook any interruption in her work or dereliction of duty from any

of her charges. Occasionally, in the quiet moments, a wistful, melancholy sadness seems to seep into her features, though it washes away a moment later as if it were but a trick of the light.

Archdruid Lanai Aynwyn leads the druids within the Burnished Grove. Most notable are the Spindles, five powerful druids that function as her eyes and ears and hands within the forest: Lahga Barrowrun (female centaur druid 17), Wilrich Owlsheart (male winterfolk halfling druid 16/ranger 2), Njadlka Fjordblood (female bearfolk druid



15/barbarian 4), Eirfyr Holsword (male elfmarked druid 17), and Aegis Cogborne (gearforged druid 14/fighter 5).

THE MAINSPRING

Also known as the “mother tree” or the “heart tree,” this towering tree occupies the middle of the Burnished Grove and is the epicenter for all the activity and industry within the forest. Where the other trees stand between fifty and one hundred feet tall, the Mainspring tops out at over three hundred, its diameter reaching forty feet at the widest point of the base. The silvery leaves are as wide as a human hand and roughly heart shaped with scalloped, razor-sharp edges. The trunk is a deep brass, bumpy and pitted like coarse bark with a fine patina dulling the shine of the metal to a more organic-looking finish. Far above within the branches grows metallic fruit roughly the size of a human head.

The entire reason for the existence of the Burnished Grove, the fruit of the Mainspring

(known as nimalli fruit) is an anomaly within the forest: it is the only thing within the grove that is not made entirely of metal. The exterior of the ovoid fruit is a shimmering rose-gold foil, but with application of firm pressure, the thin skin splits to reveal a juicy, dark purple meat beneath. At the center, through several inches of sweet purple flesh, is a pit of pure adamantite that constitutes one ingot’s worth of the precious metal.

The pulp of a ripe nimalli can be distilled by a skilled herbalist into a healing salve specifically formulated for machines and constructs. The salve dissolves rust and reforms metals, making it vital to the druids within the Burnished Grove and highly sought after by gearforged and tinkerers alike. Crafting one of these healing salves requires half a nimalli fruit and otherwise follows the rules for crafting healing potions. The salve, while restorative for constructs, is inert when used on beings of flesh and blood.



EFFECTS OF THE NIMALLI FRUIT

When a living, non-construct creature consumes the fruit of the Mainspring, it can allow them to see into the strands of existence, but not all minds are equipped to peer into

the workings of a goddess. When a character consumes the nimalli, roll on the table below to determine the side effects.

d6 EFFECT

- 1 **Catatonia.** For the next minute, the creature stares into the middle-distance and is otherwise considered unconscious.
 - 2 **Far Sight.** For the next minute, the creature is under the effects of the *foresight* spell.
 - 3 **Fugue.** For the next minute, the creature is no longer in control of their mind or body and is under the effect of the *confusion* spell with two exceptions: the creature cannot make Wisdom saving throws to end the effect and a roll of a 9–10 is treated as a 1.
 - 4 **Glossolalia.** For the next minute, the creature is under the effects of the *tongues* spell with one exception: the creature cannot speak or understand any language they already know.
 - 5 **Rejection.** The creature takes 3d10 poison damage and spends the next minute violently vomiting as the fruit is purged from their system. When the minute ends, the creature gains a point of exhaustion.
 - 6 **Rejuvenation.** The creature gains the benefits of a long rest.
-

If the raw pulp is ingested by living creatures, it can cause vivid visions of ever-twisting fates and events that may or may not come to pass, paired with hallucinations, catatonia, fugue, illness, or other unpredictable side effects as the creature's mind is assailed by things no mortal is meant to see. Because of its potentially prophetic qualities, nimalli flesh is highly cherished by the priestesses of the Clockwork Oracle in Zobeck and on the isle of Archae, and even a small amount of the fruit of the Mainspring fetches a hefty price on the black market. (See the "Effects of the Nimalli Fruit" sidebar for more details.)

Obtaining the nimalli is not without its challenges however. The druids of the forest are fiercely protective of the fruit, but the true guardians are the moirai—giant spiders of dark metal that live within the branches of the Mainspring. Also referred to as "harvesters" or "reapers," the spiders lie dormant for much of the growing season, waiting patiently for the Mainspring to bear fruit, at which point they rouse from their torpor to gather the ripe nimalli. They bequeath a portion of their harvest to the druids and keep the rest for themselves, consuming the flesh entirely and discarding the pits to the forest floor below. For the next few days, the silk they spin is imbued with the threads of fate, glowing faintly in the harsh light of the plane, and gifted to Rava herself. What becomes of the silk after that is a mystery, though many of the druids of the Burnished Grove believe Rava uses it on her great loom, weaving the ever-growing tapestry of existence, yet others claim it is twisted and reformed to create the soul gems necessary for crafting gearforged. Needless to say, anyone that attempts to

scale the Mainspring in search of fruit (or the imbued silk) must contend with the moirai who, even in their torpor, are constantly alert for intruders. Fending off one of these creatures is no small feat, and the Mainspring houses dozens of them.

MOIRAI

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d10 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.; climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	4 (-3)	15 (+2)	3 (-3)

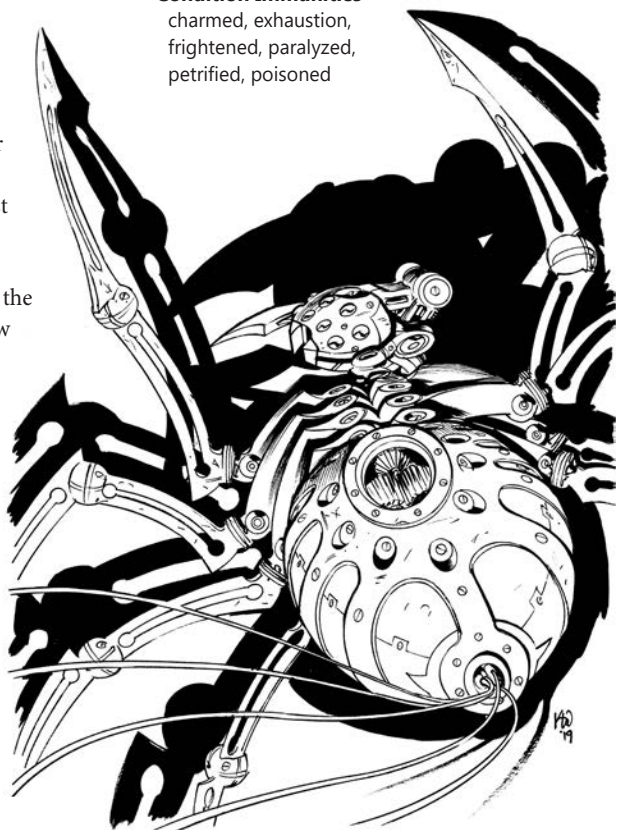
Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities

charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned



Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages machine speech

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

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

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the moirai knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The moirai ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The moirai makes either two foreleg attacks and one bite attack or one entwine attack and one bite attack.

Foreleg. Melee weapon attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Bite. Melee weapon attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Entwine (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The creature is restrained by webbing and pulled 30 feet straight toward the moirai. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 15 Strength check, breaking the web on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 11, 10 hp, vulnerability to fire damage, immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Web Quake. The moirai violently shakes its web in a 30-ft. radius. Any creature on the same web within the affected area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature is knocked prone.

Beneath the Surface

Like most things on the Plane of Gears, the Burnished Grove is far more than it appears. Beneath the trees are several levels of machinery, all working to power the Mainspring and aid in the production of its precious fruit. There are several doors and hatches scattered throughout the forest, panels nestled in large trees or hidden below the underbrush, that lead down into the subterranean depths of the woods so the druids can tend to every aspect of the

grove and make repairs where necessary.

Accessing these lower levels is not easy... the doors are well-hidden and often guarded by clockwork creatures and locked by magical means to prevent any unexpected visitors. As dangerous as the surface level of the grove is, the mazes of underground tunnels can be far more deadly for the unprepared.

LEVEL ONE: THE VERGE

Above ground, the Burnished Grove appears to be made up of thousands of individual plants and trees, but the truth is concealed just below the surface: every piece of metallic flora is connected by an interwoven network of pipes that form the roots of the entire organism, carrying fuel and waste to and from the system. In this first level, known as the Verge, these pipes (some as thin as a wrist, others large enough to fit an entire Medium-sized creature) line the walls and ceilings of the corridors in an intricate array. The thumping of engines and clanking of gears are louder here, and the rumble of vast machinery can be felt in the floor and the walls. It is warmer within the tunnels than in the forest above, and the air is stuffy and humid, filled with strange odors of oil and grease and hot metal.

The druids work here as well, adjusting settings and opening and shutting pressure-release valves to keep the steam-powered system operating at peak performance. The man-made aspect of the tunnels can be deceiving, however, as the Verge is like any other subterranean cavern network: it is difficult to navigate without guidance and prone to infestations of vermin, both clockwork and organic. The druids do their best to keep it cleared of any unwanted creatures, but their primary attention is to the pipes and the grove above, so they would rather outsource pest control to others than have to divert their efforts to something as paltry as killing rats.



LEVEL TWO: THE MARROWFORGE

Heat. That's the first thing travelers notice when they enter the Marrowforge. The second is the deafening sound of machinery. The Marrowforge houses the power of the forest: large furnaces spew heat and flame, steam spouts from pipes, and gigantic cisterns mix the vital components for the creation of the nimalli fruit, all powered by thrumming engines and grinding clockwork. Here, gearforged druids tend to the fires and, in the center of the level, feed ingots of a strange, shimmering metal, known as ætherchrome, into large vats where it is melted and pumped into the pipes of the Verge to then travel through the whole system to its ultimate destination—the Mainspring.

The heat and noise of the Marrowforge are too much for a living creature to handle for long periods of time, so gearforged and other, more mindless constructs are the main caretakers of this level. Thanks to the generally unlivable conditions of the Marrowforge, it's rare to find a creature within the tunnels that is not intended to be there. However, anything that *is* found within these steaming halls is sure to be more than a mere rat.

Because of the constant roar of the engines, any speech below the level of a

shout is rendered inaudible while within the Marrowforge. However, the noise aids any who are attempting to move unheard through the passageways: creatures have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) rolls within the Marrowforge.

LEVEL THREE: THE MIREWAYS

This sewer-like system sprawls the entire third level below the Burnished Grove. The heat from the engines above is absent here, and in comparison, the air is almost cold. The sound of the machinery above is still audible but no longer deafening. Thick, pungent sludge oozes from the Marrowforge above, through ducts in the ceiling, and flows away from the center of the forest in channels like the spokes of a great wheel. A slurry of chemicals, lubricants, and the occasional corpse of a lost and deactivated construct or wayward creature, the dark, viscous liquid is highly acrid, and getting too close can lead to burned lungs at best—and a tragic fall into the muck at worst.

There is no light in the Mireways. The sludge itself gives off a faint, sickly purple glow when in complete darkness but is too dim to see by. Those without darkvision will find themselves hard pressed to navigate the Mireways without a light of some sort, but open flame is highly discouraged: pockets of odorless, highly flammable gasses are often found within these corridors and can be catastrophic if met with a burning torch or spark from flint and steel.

CLOCKWORK HAZARDS

A land of machinery and moving gears can often be volatile and unpredictable. The Burnished Grove, while seemingly peaceful and well-run, is no different. Enterprising GMs who wish to throw a bit more of a challenge at their players can incorporate one or more of these aspects within the Burnished Grove.

- **Perilous Pendulums.** While navigating portions of the Burnished Grove,



OPTIONAL EXHAUSTION RULES

Because of the oppressive atmosphere within the Marrowforge, any living creature that spends too much time within the tunnels typically finds their body and mind worn down from the incessant heat and noise. For each hour spent within the Marrowforge, each creature must roll a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature suffers a point of exhaustion, compounding with each subsequent failure. A long rest or application of *greater restoration* removes one point of exhaustion.

adventurers must be constantly on guard for wayward elements of clockwork. Turning gears, swinging pendulums, and steaming pressure-release valves all pose risks for those not always on their toes. Certain areas of the Verge, Marrowforge, or Mireways may only be accessible by a well-timed sprint through an array of clanking clockwork or a carefully balanced trek on a beam across a chasm filled with churning gears.

- **Thunderous Chimes.** The workings of the Burnished Grove are even and metered, and the druids of the grove are kept on schedule by the chiming of a giant timepiece somewhere within the bowels of the forest, ringing out the hour. The sound can be heard from anywhere within the grove, but in the lower depths, it reverberates off the metal walls and crescendos to a deafening level. At the top of each hour, when the great clock chimes, creatures within the subterranean levels (that is, the Verge, Marrowforge, or Mireways) must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature is stunned for 1 round and takes 1d10 force damage; at noon and midnight, due to the longer duration of the chiming, the creature is stunned for 1 minute and takes 3d10 force damage. The druids who work within the depths of the grove carry ear coverings to protect themselves from the excruciating noise.
- **Shifting Grounds.** The mechanisms within the trees are not the only elements of the grove that move. All four levels of the Burnished Grove shift slowly but steadily, like great gears of a clock, and do so at different speeds and in different directions. Doorways move, orientations shift, and what was a northerly pathway at dawn may be facing south by dusk. Traveling between the levels becomes particularly tricky—a hatchway that gave

access to the Verge, for example, may be closed off when a party finally returns or may lead to a completely different section of the surface than before.

Accessing the Burnished Grove

The location of the Burnished Grove—the Plane of Gears—causes some trouble for adventurers (or tourists) eager to view the forest's beauties and oddities for themselves. Naturally, powerful wielders of the arcane have their ways of accessing the planes, but there are other ways to reach this mythical wood if a party lacks a practitioner with the means of extraplanar travel. Rumors claim that a gearforged shopkeeper in Zobeck will, for the right price, allow adventurers access to a brass door that opens directly onto the Plane of Gears. And there are tales of a cavern deep within the Wasted West that holds a shimmering portal that deposits a traveler conveniently on the edges of the Burnished Grove itself. Needless to say, gaining access to either of these entry points is not easy—and often not cheap. Other ways to the plane surely exist for those determined enough to find them.



SLUDGE HAZARDS

Adventurers who find themselves in the Mireways must be particularly cautious to avoid the sludge-filled channels that line this claustrophobic level. When a creature comes within five feet of the sludge, they take 1d4 poison damage per round from the fumes. If a creature enters the sludge itself, they take 1d6 acid damage on contact and an additional 1d6 acid damage per round they spend in the sludge. If in combat, damage is applied when the creature enters the affected space and when they start their turn in the affected space.

Adventure Seeds

For GMs eager to incorporate the Burnished Grove into their setting, we offer a few adventure seeds to get your imagination going. Obviously, feel free to create your own if none of these fit within the story you and your players are creating.

- **Fruitful Harvest:** A dwarf smith has heard tell of a grove within the Plane of Gears, a place where seeds of pure adamantine rain from the sky and lay strewn about the ground like refuse. She is willing to pay market price plus hazard pay for these seeds but has no desire to accompany the party.
- **Inconvenient Infestation:** Rust monsters have managed to make their way into the Burnished Grove, damaging vital parts of the machinery and throwing the entire system into chaos. The druids have cleared them from the trees and underbrush on the surface, but they need adventurers to venture into the subterranean levels and make sure there are no more of the creatures below... even one lingering rust monster can wreak havoc on the entire delicate system.
- **Modest Proposal:** An enterprising (if rather shady) alchemist desires the nimalli fruit for study. She's willing to pay handsomely for each intact nimalli fruit brought to her. She doesn't know much about the Burnished Grove itself, but she's sure the party will be more than capable of handling whatever it may hold.
- **Tinker's Paradise:** A gnome tinkerer has spent her entire life searching out rumors of the mechanical forest. She is searching for an escort to take her to the Plane of Gears and the Burnished Grove with the intent to remain there for several weeks to study the intricate clockwork within.

Player Option: Circle of the Evergyre

Druids who follow the Circle of the Evergyre have a unique kinship with both machine and nature and are devoted to the turning of the wheel, heedless of morality (tending toward lawful neutral)—nature is a cold, emotionless machine, constantly moving forward and perpetuating itself, concerned more with the survival of the whole rather than the individual. Sometimes a worn or broken cog must be replaced so that the system may survive. Druids who follow the Circle of the Evergyre are far more likely to help civilization work in concert with nature rather than openly disrupt any construction or technological progress: they feel at home within a bustling city as much as a secluded forest and view responsible development as an evolutionary imperative.

Druids who follow the Circle of the Evergyre often face backlash and prejudice (or at the very least a severe frown of disapproval) from druids who maintain a more traditional worldview. Clockwork, being a creation of man as well as Rava, draws criticism and skepticism from most druids, and one who chooses this path should be aware of the potential disdain from their brethren. Some traditional druids view the Circle of the Evergyre as anathema, often refusing to work with them and sometimes going so far as denying the clockwork druids entry into more natural druidic groves.

CIRCLE OF THE EVERGYRE FEATURES

2nd	Machine Speech, Circle Spells
6th	Additional Contagion, Affinity for the Forged
10th	Ore Weaver
14th	Beast in the Machine

MACHINE SPEECH

When you choose the Circle of the Evergyre at 2nd level, you tap into the workings of clockwork, constructs, and machinery. You can cast *machine speech* (see *Deep Magic: Clockwork* or *Midgard Heroes Handbook*) without consuming a spell slot.

CIRCLE SPELLS

When you choose Circle of the Evergyre, you increase your affinity for machines, forging a deeper connection with automata, constructs, and similar creations of Rava and mortal alike. At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, you gain access to circle spells. These spells can be found within *Deep Magic: Clockwork* and the *Midgard Heroes Handbook*.

Once you gain access to a circle spell, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. You cast these spells as druid spells.

DRUID LEVEL CIRCLE SPELLS

3rd	<i>repair metal, lock armor</i>
5th	<i>gear barrage, soul of the machine</i>
7th	<i>grinding gears, steam blast</i>
9th	<i>mass repair metal, mechanical union</i>



ADDITIONAL CONTAGION

At 6th level, rust (see *Deep Magic: Clockwork*) is added to your list of effects for the *contagion* spell.

AFFINITY FOR THE FORGED

You have an uncanny ability to connect with constructs and other metal creations. At 6th level, you're able to cast the *summon clockwork beast* ritual once per day (see below). In addition, when you use the *commune with nature* spell, construction no longer inhibits your ability to sense your

surroundings. If you are in an environment composed of metal, your range is 3 miles; other constructed environments are limited to 300 feet.

ORE WEAVER

Metal is a product of the earth, a natural resource needlessly shunned by other druids. But you, with your broadened horizons, can tap directly into that reserve. At 10th level, you are able to pull raw metal from the very ground beneath your feet or twist existing metal to suit your purposes. Twice per day, as an action, you can use this feature to create one of the following effects:

- You create a nonmagical metal dome (3 inches thick and with a 10-foot radius) around you that can fit up to nine other creatures of Medium size or smaller. When you use this feature, you may choose the type of metal (though your GM may restrict your options based on rarity and environment) and whether the dome is solid or includes openings like windows and doors (though there are no hinges, so any openings are just that—openings). The dome lasts for 12 hours or until you dispel it, at which point it crumbles and returns to the earth.
- You create a wall, bridge, or other structure as with the *wall of stone* spell with the following differences: your structure is made of metal rather than stone, and the AC for each panel is 18 instead of 15. The initial metal panel must be in contact with the ground. When you use this feature, you may choose the type of metal (though your GM may restrict your options based on rarity and environment).
- You bend or shape existing metal as with the *stone shape* spell.

After you use this feature twice, you must finish a long rest before you can use it again.

BEAST IN THE MACHINE

At 14th level, you've mastered the melding of nature and construct. Your beast forms are now mechanical in nature, coated in metal and immune to much that would injure a creature of pure flesh and blood. While in beast form, you gain the Flesh of Steel trait of the gearforged (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*) and also gain resistance to piercing, bludgeoning, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons. Your attacks while in this form are considered magical.

CLOCKWORK BEASTS

The Circle of the Evergyre gains access to the summon clockwork beast spell and the little clockworks it summons.

SUMMON CLOCKWORK BEAST

5th-level clockwork (conjuration) (ritual)

Casting time: 10 minutes

Range: 10 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a handful of tiny gears)

Duration: 1 hour

Once per day, you can cast this ritual to summon a Tiny clockwork beast. The creature is considered a construct and can take the shape of the following: a spider, rat, snake, octopus, bat, or raven. Appearing in an unoccupied space within range, the clockwork beast gains the statistics listed below.

The clockwork beast acts independently of you but always obeys your commands. In combat, it rolls its own initiative and acts on its own turn.

When the clockwork beast is within 100 feet of you, you can communicate with it telepathically. Additionally, as an action, you can see through the clockwork beast's eyes and hear what it hears, and you continue to do so until you use your action to return to your normal senses. During this time, you are deaf and blind with regard to your own senses.

The clockwork beast doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep. When its hit points are

reduced to 0, it crumbles into a heap of gears and springs.

CLOCKWORK BEAST

Tiny construct, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 30 ft., (depending on its form, the construct gains the following movement) spider climb 20 ft.; rat climb 20 ft.; snake swim 20 ft.; octopus swim 20 ft.; bat fly 20 ft.; raven fly 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	3 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands common, telepathy 100 ft. (summoner only)

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.



A GRAND TOUR OF THE ELEVEN HELLS

by Wolfgang Baur

The Eleven Hells of Midgard are the least-visited, least-studied, and most-feared planes known to the mortal world, ranking in the realm of whispered horrors and extremely scanty documentation. Those who visit rarely recommend them.

Often confused with Evermaw (the divine realm of the gods of undeath) and the Yawning Void (a nightmare realm beyond mortal understanding), the Eleven Hells are the homes of demons, devils, and fiends of all kinds, and most are at least theoretically survivable by living visitors. They are ruled by dark forces inimical to those of good and light. While some might seem relatively benign on the surface, all contain horrors, and all are hostile to the goals of righteous folk.

Cosmology of the Infernal Planes

Some souls migrate over the River Lethe and down the Styx to the hells for punishment in the afterlife, but these planes are primarily realms given over to dark forces and purely malevolent creatures, which seek to corrupt, destroy, and conquer all realms. Their eternal war against the forces of the light is sporadic but persistent, and mortals who visit the Eleven will often find themselves drawn into this struggle by corruption, selfishness, ambition, or wrath. Thus do the hells turn all the multiverse to their corrupt purposes.

Several of the hells themselves are known to send ambassadors to the mortal world, seeking closer ties. Evil nations such as Niemheim and Caelmarath both have (or had) deep connections to the hells, and their people frequently visit. Other wiser nations avoid any and all contact with the diabolical and the demonic.

Structurally, the Eleven Hells follow a progression from Urgennos (the most common entry to the Eleven as a whole) to Chundresh (the most difficult to reach from mortal lands or from Yggdrasil). However, this is not strictly a linear path: Urgennos and its fire connect directly to Efrizzarr's ice, Qesal-Marit's darkness, and the cold waters of Archedantuss and the Styx. No well-attested planar document describes all the connections between the Eleven Hells, though it seems clear that they are roughly ranked from easiest to enter to most difficult. The roads and gates between them are somehow controlled by the archdukes, dark gods, and demon lords who rule them; they are not dependent on ley lines or similar magic but on transdimensional arcane rites known primarily to fiends and certain trusted cultists.

Servants and Vassals Among the Hells

The inhabitants of the Eleven Hells are vast in number, and they include all known demons and devils, many tieflings, great apocalyptic heralds, and purely mercenary fiends and horrors who traverse the hells and make a fortune defending one warlord against another. Other evil races from ogres to derro and even the world-ending satarre (see *Underworld Player's Guide*) can be found among the hells as well, at least in particular sites and cities.

While most reports of the hells emphasize the societies and people therein, it is worth noting that many bizarre and fiend-inflected plant and animal species exist and are unique to these planes. These range from the common sulfur rats and bluewing biting flies to necrotic mammoths, noxious hell weed and shambling brambles, tar melons, head-like ingattet, and bloodsucking thickets of various kinds. Leopard-spotted goats, murderous teal river pigs, and other familiar-yet-twisted species are found in every one of the hells, either feral or as domesticated animals.

1. URGENNOS, LUMINOUS HELL OF FIRE AND SULFUR

Urgennos is a plane of choking smoke, sinuous rivers of lava and strangely dancing sky-rivers made of ash, and stony ground, teeming with peculiar fireweeds and black brambles. Clouds of noxious smoke often fill the air, and settlements are few and far between. The dominant life forms are the vast swarms of slintesh, also called sulfur rats, that devour both plants and the living. (For slintesh statistics, use *wolves*.) Alnaar demons,

fire imps, and echo demons are all quite common as well, as are efreeti and malign fire elementals and salamanders.

The primary city of the plane is Ahtesseri, the City of Flowering Fire, known for its magma fountains and its exotic scents, perfumes, and metal works. Among its citizenry are barbed devils, salt devils, and gilded devils, and a large number of efreeti find the place congenial. Looming over the city and staffed with hundreds of barbed devils and fire imps is the Scarred Palace, a frequently blackened and occasional scarlet-painted monstrosity of turrets, heavy walls, and deep-dug barracks. This is the seat of power of Duchess Alsikaya, the Screeching Mother of Volcanoes, ruling the majority of



Urgennos with her occasional consort and favored warlord, Mechuiti, Lord of Apes and Fire. Duchess Alsikaya is a babbling demonic creature of hideous stench, a round-faced and stringy-haired demon with some resemblance to a troll and covered in pustules that resemble small volcanic cinder cones.

Their rival on the plane is Camazotz, the Lord of Bats, who rules the rusted, stony Qëqboo Peaks and the seemingly infinite caverns of explosive gas and teeming insects beneath them. His various demonic hordes are often mistaken for swiftly flying clouds, and they strike and retreat with dizzying speed. Most of these are neophron or echo demons, though some are vrock, fire imps, wind demons, and even stranger species of demon. Camazotz seems to have no particular favorite abode, though the Ubintel Caverns see him often enough to maintain the Singing Shrine to his name, sometimes called the Cayin Shrine of Camazotz.

In addition, the demon lord Typhon, Lord of Monsters (see *Creature Codex*) lives in Urgennos, gathering an army of fiends to some purpose known only to itself. The mustering grounds are called the Brambles, a region of thorny execrable shrubs and devil boughs (see *Creature Codex*). The demon lord seems to have a vast store of coin and lemmings to feed to demonic mercenaries, infernal troops, and stranger denizens of the planes. At some point, it is expected it will march against the Storm Court, Valhalla, or the Celestial Stairs.

2. EFRIZARR, FROZEN HELL OF ICE AND SILENCE

Efrizarr is a hell of snow and ice, of cities carved into glaciers miles deep, and of entire armies frozen near the gates where they entered without sufficient preparation for the blizzards, frozen tundra, and lack of sustenance that characterize the plane. While the event is rare, the temperature of Efrizarr

does rise above freezing from time to time, allowing rivers to turn to churning masses of ice and slush, destroying bridges and wiping away settlements along their banks. These times are also known for chilling fogs, which cover everything in thin rime.

The greatest city of Efrizarr is Azulanta, a deep-blue series of chambers and corridors beneath the Azulor Glacier, home to demons, devils, imps, and a surprisingly large group of frost giants and dwarves. Rune-encrusted stone tunnels connect the blue ice chambers and corridors to the magma-heated chambers called the Foreigner's Gallery where temperatures are tolerable for most mortal races. This quarter includes the Bitteran Forge, where the ice devils and other creatures of Efrizarr melt, refreeze, and forge various ice spears, craft steel and iron weapons and armor, and mint coinage and melt treasure into bars, for instance. Warmth-tolerant creatures are often taken as slaves to pump the bellows, feed the furnaces, and handle the iron worked in the Bitteran Forge.

The city is ruled by Duke Gletsagrim, an arch-devil of frost and glacial powers who resembles a mummified frost giant with eyes of bitter blue, two additional arms, and a smaller creature embedded in his chest, a fleshbound servitor called Gletsa Minor. This creature seems to be some form of undead, perhaps a wight, with frozen breath and bluish hair and limbs. Gletsagrim himself seems to have powers of prophecy or runelore rarely found in the hells and frequently drinks waters stolen from Hvergelmir (the Well of Nidhoggr at the root of Yggdrasil) to retain these powers. As a result, he often knows exactly when to expect visitors, can address them by name without introduction, and generally seems shockingly well-informed about plots against him. Most of his foes wind up frozen in a glacier or turned into a bloody paste by frost giant clubs.

In addition, the dark god Boreas maintains a residence here as well as his tower in the

mortal world. These two are said to be linked by a simple portal that allows the God of the North Wind easy access between his two domiciles.

Efrizarr is well known for its peculiar weather systems: silent storms and thunderice storms. The silent storms are magical bursts of powerful wind, up to eighty or ninety miles per hour, that tear icicles from overhangs and that kick snow into the sky—and that utterly silence any creature that remains within the winds for more than a minute. After the storm passes, voices and sounds return within a minute.

The thunderice storms are powerful hailstorms that combine lightning strikes and hail the size of a fist or larger, often resembling the effects of both *call lightning* and *ice storm* spells. These storms are sent with a purpose: both Boreas and Duke Gletsagrim seem able to command the storms to attack particular targets or chase fugitives, leading to the local expression, “Might as well die fighting since you can never outrun the storm.” The demons of Efrizarr are a stoic bunch.

Connections from Efrizarr are known to lead up a frozen river of black ice (sometimes called the Sable Slush) to the Riverine Hell. Boat fiends on the Slush charge extra; the work of keeping a skiff, barge, or barque afloat among the ice is exhausting even for enormously strong servants of Charun and the river lords.



3. QES-AL-MARIT, SHIFTING HELL OF DARKNESS AND BONE DUNES

Qes-al-Marit resembles a vast open plain under a sky of blinking, often moving lights, a place where darkness seeps into everything, the earth is chill, and white sand drifts in vast constellations of dunes, waves, and even rivers. The shifting sands often seem to whisper to those who listen closely, and some poets are driven mad by the sand of Qes-al-Marit, which retains its slithering and blasphemous voice when removed from the plane.

The Hell of Darkness is not heavily populated. Its demons and devils are quite few but extremely dangerous, including balors, owl harpies, erinyes, various sphinxes, malakbel demons, as well as salt devils, nalfeshnee demons, crystalline devils, and harvester devils. Barbed devils are also quite common as are a variety of blue-skinned tiefling rarely seen elsewhere.

The Qes-al-Marit is home to nomadic groups of fiends, some shepherding flocks of souls while others are more warlike and given to banditry. Its greatest city is Sa-Mozan, the City of Silences, the home of Alquam. Its walls are made of black glass ten feet thick, carved with hideous protective wards, resembling glass shards or spikes that project from the walls, which cut everything they touch. These walls are often bathed in the blood of creatures executed there, enemies of its people.

The ruler of Sa-Mozan is the owl-like Alquam, the Demon Lord of Night, Prince of Nocturnes, Master of Silence, and King of the Whispering Wastes. His rule is capricious, and he plays favorites against one another constantly; new visitors (especially mortal ones) are sometimes brought to his palace atop the city's acropolis, among a dozen ruined temples to other rulers or dark gods, to stand and wait upon Alquam's curiosity, surrounded by twenty or a hundred lunar devils. Sometimes this takes the form of an awkward, painful staring contest when the eyes of Alquam seem to dissect a visitor, leaving them paralyzed or confused. Other times, the demon lord asks a few questions about the mortal world and quickly grows bored. On rare occasions, a visitor is eaten or held hostage for reasons that are rarely shared with the victim; other members of the fiendish band or adventuring company are let go with a prophecy in hand or a blade of lunar steel. Some whisper that it was Alquam who created the Scepter of Silence, which Shelesorra stole from him via some peculiar bargain or through subterfuge.

Another important figure in Qes-al-Marit is the Queen of the Ghuls, her majesty Aicha Qandisha, and her various followers. Exiled from Evermaw by Vardesain and his legions, the queen seeks to prove her strength and increase her following among necromancers, ghouls, and cultists throughout the planes and is known to readily grant arcane and divine favors to her faithful.

4. ARCHEDANTUSS, RIVERINE HELL OF THE STYX & LETHE

The plane of Archedantuss is sometimes proposed as the entryway to the Eleven Hells as the rivers that feature so prominently in its topography also connect to less maleficent places and water the roots of Yggdrasil. However, others believe that this knot of waters, marshes, and riverbanks is more akin to a maze or labyrinth, meant to keep planar travelers from any further progress into the hells. This is because while the rivers lead into Archedantuss they rarely seem to lead out. The god Charun the Boatman deposits souls here hourly as do other psychopomps and gods concerned with the great passage from life into afterlife, arriving from all the mortal worlds with a few coins on their eyes—small fiery souls seeking forgiveness, mercy, punishment, absolution, but finding only the fog and despair of this hell where nothing is ever forgiven, where fiends never display pity, and where punishment is plentiful but absolution is unattainable. Souls brought here writhe in shame and torment and are quickly enslaved, devoured, or cheated by the many devils and soulstealers who frequent its shores.

Duke Mammon (see *Tome of Beasts*) collects coins from the dead souls, surrounded by legions of gilded devils and hezrou who patrol the rivers, seeking easy prey among the lost souls. His throne sits in the city of Plutus, a lavish and ostentatious place of gilded pillars and glittering roof tiles, where the Castle Oriel contains both stymphalian birds of bronze, an entire legion of devils, and a fraction of

Mammon's great wealth in the form of coins, rings, necklaces, and other golden objects. The streets of Plutus are paved with a golden shade of copper, and its doors are worked silver. As a result, visitors are often confounded by how any such place can feel so empty and

impoverished, but the inhabitants of Plutus are miserly, cruel, and ungracious, often cursing at strangers, denying any hospitality, and holding themselves about the "penniless tourists" who dare visit them. Instead they spend their time on an endless round of



one-upmanship with other devils, which consumes their energies entirely. Compassion, a friendly greeting, or even an honest smile are unknown to Mammon's followers.

No other great cities stand in Archdantuss, though the Nebbuzzar Cove is a gathering place for riverfolk, including charonadaemons, hezrou, angels of judgement, and priests of Charun. The Boathouse Temple there stands along the riverbank and is said to be eternally full of ghosts and spirits.

5. BZELETALET, BUZZING HELL OF INSECTS

Bzeletalet is a plane of forested hills, mild climate, and abundant prey and herd animals, from infernal swine to vast flocks of flightless birds. Throughout are dozens or hundreds of tosculi cities and colossal shrines to Arbeyach and similar diabolical figures, for the tosculi consider Bzeletalet a paradise rather than any kind of hell at all.

Duke Arbeyach is a power here along with the arch-devil Ia'Affrat (see *Tome of Beasts*), though by most standards the realm of Bzeletalet is considered a minor hell at best. Its people are tosculi, infernal wasps, and similar things, all buzzing and chitinous and eager to devour softer visitors whole.

The many hive-cities of Bzeletalet are named after their founders and include the extremely ancient halls and honeycombed chambers of Usmarrek, Yseetet, and K'kar'iket. Each of these hive-cities is devoted to a diabolical lord, and each generates vast legions of ice devils, tosculi diabolists and warriors, automata devils, and more. The tosculi system of totally devoted service to their hive queens fits very neatly with the devils' system of hierarchy, and the two seem to strengthen one another not only when they serve in a planar army but more generally.

The partnership works like this: tosculi are builders and farmers, able to generate a vast array of foodstuffs, walls, weapons, and more. The devils and archdevils provide arcane

might and planar portals for the tosculi to raid not just their neighbors but mortal races far distant from tosculi homelands. When one of the insect armies of Bzeletalet arrives out of a hell portal, the world might as well be ending for any humans, dwarves, or goblins nearby—their system of conquest and strip mining of food, metals, slaves, and magic is extremely well-developed, and a region plundered by an infernal army may never recover at all. All that remains in these places is usually an ancient portal, half-powered, that awaits someone foolish enough to link a ley line to it or that uses liminal magic to empower and restore the connection to the hells and step through to Bzeletalet. When this happens, the tosculi often know that a region has recovered somewhat and might be worth returning to for an additional round of plunder, raiding, and blood sacrifices.

6. SNORECKSUBO, LINGERING HELL OF PLAGUES

Snorecksubo is a strange hell, a place that in many regards seems a normal, if oppressive, plane of millions of tielfings, greater fiends, hobgoblins, ogre magi, wasteland dragons, and other creatures living and working to serve dark gods such as Marena, the White Goddess, and the Hunter. It resembles a string of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of islands in a rust-red sea with enormous hive-like cities on the biggest of these and smaller fishing villages and farms on smaller islands.

The duke of Snorecksubo is the Shogun Ai-Tai-Anma, a bearded arch-devil usually dressed in an Eastern and courtly manner and sometimes in lamellar armor and holding a green mace of malachite infused with the power of disease, called the Arbiter Mace of Snorecksubo. Some believe that Ai-Tai-Anma is an Eastern mask of the death god Anu-Akma, but this may simply be a too-literal conclusion drawn on the linguistic similarity of their names. Others point out that devils are rarely masks for one another.

In any case, Ai-Tai-Anma uses his mace to start plagues among courtiers who displease him—merely touching someone with the mace is usually fatal, and the victims are exiled from the palace, spreading their contagion further.

All creatures of Snorecksubo rush to seek shelter in locked homes or in overcrowded temples when the plagues come. The plagues burn through entire towns and cities but disappear as quickly as they come. While some might see thousands or tens of thousands of infected creatures as a chance to rally magical healing and show mercy, in this hell, no curing touch or spell seems to work. The fickle hand of the plague strikes down rather at random and weeds out the elderly and the young with special ferocity. Mass graves are common. Empty cities are certainly known. And no inhabitant knows when next the plague will come.

While most plagues of Snorecksubo merely kill their victims, a few worse plagues are also well-known here. The zombie plague turns its victims into undead, the spore plague devours the bodies from within and then explodes it in a messy set of spores, and the burning plague generates a fever that eventually becomes a literal fire, often leading to a combination of plague and citywide blazes.

7. EMWABBIK EM, ALIEN HELL OF THE ACID ABYSS

Emwabbik Em is a place of tall tales and few believable reports. It contains entire continents filled with vast forests of xichar columns, a species of fiendish or at least malevolent tree that carries vile, burning fluid from the swampy ground up to enormous



heights where it is sprayed as a corrosive mist or rain over all beneath them. Visitors must be immune to the dissolving power of these sprays in most of the territory of Emwabbik Em as the mists are carried far from the forests, scouring grasslands into yellow husks, destroying the few crops (primarily tar melon and the nutty, somewhat gritty sanga grain, but also headfruit—see Fleggesun for details).

The acid abyss has thousands or tens of thousands of small villages, formed where fiends have placed slate stones or racks of campareash leaves in between the xichar columns, forming dry spaces as shelter and then planting tar melon vines or harvesting headfruit for sustenance. Most of these

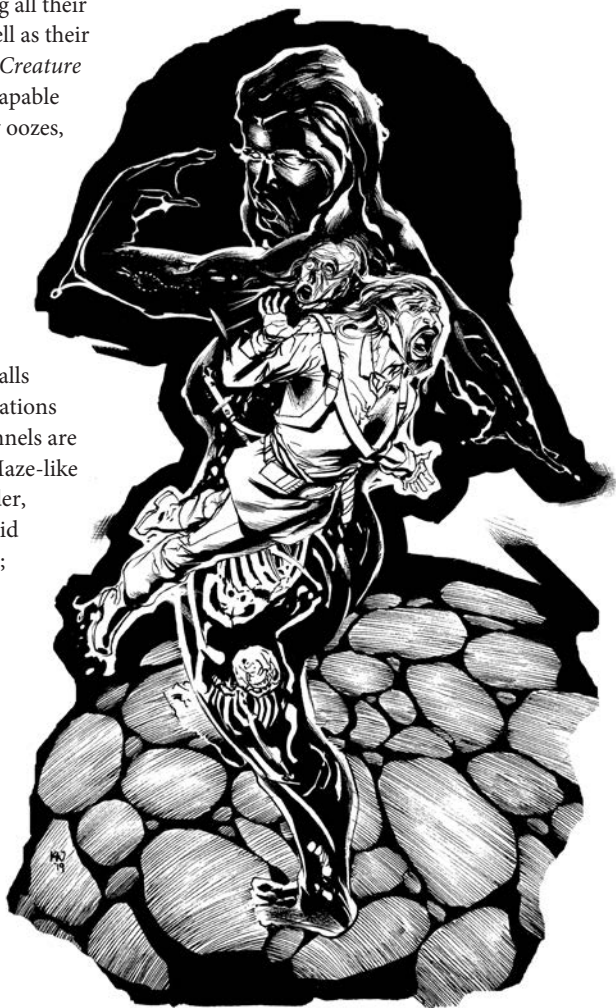
villages are a few dozen ill-tempered fiends, but about a third of them are populated by enormous hezrou demons or similar major figures—ruled by a xecha king or queen—who use the villages to gather up soul coins, ambush neighboring villages, and seek to carve out small fiefdoms.

The layer's ruler is Xecha Zecha Amblamar, the Lady of Pure Distillate. While her form is generally humanoid, twelve feet tall, her flesh is a translucent green and turquoise, somewhat like a humanoid gelatinous cube. Sometimes she surrounds and absorbs smaller humanoids, slowly peeling them from the outside in, and (it is said) absorbing all their magic, talents, and memories as well as their flesh and bone. The *ahu-nixta* (see *Creature Codex*) are her most devoted and capable servants, and she commands many oozes, worms, and evil elementals.

The acidic oceans of Emwabbik Em are home to the demon lord Chemosh, Lord of Conquest, and his sahuagin, shark-jaw skeletons, and deep one legions. Almost nothing is known of his Great Shark Citadel other than that its walls are said to be made of entire generations of whale bones, and its interior tunnels are lit only by bioluminescent coral. Maze-like and meant to confound any intruder, some of the citadel's tunnels are said to be filled with pure acid distillate; visitors may not notice until their eyes and armor are already half-dissolved. The very heart of the Great Shark Citadel is said to be a gathering place of leviathans and godlings bent on the conquest of mortal oceans and the death of entire nations of sea elves, locathah, and similar creatures.

8. FLEGGESUN, FETID HELL OF CANNIBAL ROT

Fleggesun is a hell of decay, fungal growth, lush green and purple jungles, and stench-ridden marshes along pestilential riverbeds. Its inhabitants are mushroom folk and oozes, demons of decay, mud-spattered, surface-dwelling derro, and a particularly aggressive species of subek (see *Tome of Beasts*). Everywhere you look is mud, whispering reeds, and frequent, oily rain. The smell of the place is almost impossible to remove from wool or linen.



The largest city of Fleggesun is a reeking pile of crumbled stone and rotting reed rooftops called Hargemissan, the Halls of Necrosis, City of Leather and Worms, filled with towering temples to all the dark gods and inhabited by trollkin, tieflings, trolls, ogres, barbed devils, subek, and minotaurs as well as oozes and various forms of mushroom folk and even derro. The place is enormous but decayed and decrepit, a city that looks as if it were once wealthy and powerful with entire quarters partly underwater and other sections overgrown and inhabited only by flies and lizards. Hargemissan sits on the banks of a tributary of the River Styx with good connections by river barge to Archedantuss.

All the races of Fleggesun are headhunters, cannibals, or otherwise depraved and evil, and they practice the rearing or conjuration of ingattet (in-GAH-tet, or literally “headfruit”). This is an alchemical process that transforms the head of an enemy into a shrunken sphere the size of an apple or even a plum and retains its rough shape. These small items can be devoured by their owner with the effect of a *potion of healing*, or they can be eaten and used to grant advantage to a single die roll. Ingattet are sometimes used as primitive currency, and creatures wearing large necklaces of them are generally either extremely lethal combatants or extremely high-status rulers among the plane’s various tribes and factions.

The Lord of all Rot is better known as Qorgeth, Demon Lord of the Devouring Worm, a servitor or at least ally of the hunger god Vardesain and an ancient entity of evil in its own right. It maintains an audience chamber at the shrine city of Kneccor where the flow of blood and sacrifices to its gullet is constant. Visitors are few. Most of the city inhabitants are ghouls, members of Qorgeth’s cult, or wyrmhearted suffragans (see *Tome of Beasts*).

9. NAKHOL, VANISHING HELL OF IGNORANCE

In Nakhol, all creatures are stunted and stupid, and visitors to the realm quickly realize that the plane itself is hostile to knowledge and learning through strange mechanisms that are quite difficult to discern. Scrolls and books (even magical ones) brought into Nakhol quickly fade with cantrips and non-magical writing disappearing within hours, 1st-level spells within a day, 2nd-level spells within 2 days, and so on. All Knowledge rolls made on the plane are made at disadvantage.

The landscape of Nakhol is pleasant enough: rolling plains, wide rivers, copper and crimson forests, all interspersed with cloud-shrouded mountains and winding roads that always seem to circle back to the great city of Luret-Moire at its heart. This is a place entirely built to confound visitors: it has a very tall city wall set with more than twenty impossibly thin, 600-foot-high towers, each of which has a commanding view over the plains. Within, its streets curve and spiral and sometimes fail to intersect properly as one street sometimes bridges over or dives under another; at other times, streets simply dead-end without warning. Luret-Moire is all about function at some level; its squarish and hexagonal buildings are connected via skybridges and floating streets and barges at the upper levels, and tunnels below the streets are comfortable terrain for the tieflings, satarre, and lesser devils who make up most of the city’s population. There is no map, and there are no street signs; natives know their way around, and giving directions is an unknown custom. Visitors are encouraged to hire a guide to help them get anywhere specific.

And the tone of the place is quite unlike the rest of Nakhol. It seems, in some ways, as if all the elegance and wisdom and skill that has been drained from elsewhere on this plane are presented here in baroque and florid form. Everything is decorated, embellished,

gilded and overblown. Demons wear pocket watches, and devils offer elaborate courtesy to visitors (before attempting to draw them into depravity and evil of course). Flattery, poetry, and even scholarly discussion can be heard on the streets, even if nothing is ever written down. Songs and jests and incredibly filthy jokes pass through Luret-Moire like fair winds. It is a strange thing to hear laughter, even cruel laughter, in the hells, but it is found here.

Nakhol is ruled by Parzelon, Arch-Devil of Secrets (see *Creature Codex*). All knowledge in Nakhol belongs to Parzelon and him alone, for he controls the magical Library of Sondre-Fillieux where all the disappearing knowledge and fading writing of the plane is pooled and somehow retained. Secret shames and dark deeds useful for extortion find their way into Archduke Parzelon's many dossiers and files. Cryptic prayers and lost arcana are found in his golden books of dark piety and forgotten spellcraft. While he lacks anything like the armies of other arch-dukes, he is rarely at war with any of them, for he knows everyone's secret weaknesses, fears, and frailties, and those who cross him find their reputation in tatters, their fiefdoms undermined by rumor, and their most important servitors and proxies mysteriously absent.

10. SOOLEEED, MIRROR HELL OF LIES

The deeply disquieting plane of Soolee'd (SOH-leh-lead) is a world of illusions and shadows where very little is real and most creatures, objects, and even features of the landscape are not as they appear. Items melt and reform over a period of hours; some lakes and hills are little more than mirror-trickery, and entire villages may be reflections of a single building or a mirror maze of real and illusory places. Likewise, the inhabitants of Soolee'd are shapeshifting, skilled at deception, and often spin webs of arcane deception impenetrable to even the keenest eye. Add to this the truly bizarre weather of

the place: whirlwinds that carry illusions away or coat entire landscapes in bright colors or hellish spikes, rains of acid that dissolve all lies for a time, washing away deceptions and leaving the plane's creatures in their true form until their illusions are restored, and night time when all shadows are animated and all darkness grows hungry. In most ways, strangest of all are the mirror shard winds, a silvery wind that chills creatures and deposits a peculiar mirror coating on all surfaces, turning everything reflective. Soolee'd is a place where nothing can be relied on, even the ground and sky are subject to change and subject to vanishing into something else entirely. Nothing can be trusted.

While it might seem that a plane of shifting reality and constant deception would be a terrible place to attempt to build a large settlement, the will of the Duchess of Lies has made it possible to build a city of great splendor. This is Traumhof, the City of Beautiful Dreams, which changes its face daily to suit the ruler's whims and which retains a simple, effective structure underneath thick layers of illusion, glamour, and arcane frosting. At its center is the Palace of Perfection, a mirrored hall with diamond pillars that is quite difficult to navigate without careful attention at all times as the whole building seems optimized to confound the eye. A passive Perception of 15 or better is required to move through the palace without stumbling into walls or mistaking mirrors for doors.

The city's primarily inhabitants are fiends, possibly doppelgangers, and many other shapeshifters and shadow creatures, including voidlings, shadows, and satarre (see *Underworld Player's Guide*). Many are here for the prominent college of illusion magic, the College of Subtle Mirrors. The archmagi at its heart are Speega Narra and Sporra Vet, two Khandirian humans who came to learn from this plane and found that their talents were appreciated here. The students are generally evil aligned but not always,

and their mastery of illusion is enhanced by the properties of the plane itself. Many of the students walk around with a particular variant of mirror image, meaning that they always appear to be three or four identical selves in class.

Duchess Shelesorra, the Arch-Devil of Lies and Cruelty, rules the plane as the sworn foe of Totivillus, the Diabolical Scribe, and as the nemesis of all gods of truth and justice. As the perverted and depraved daughter of Addrikah and Mammon, Shelesorra is the Mother of Doppelgangers and Queen of Illusion, able to bend reality around her and to skew anyone's senses into a conflicting welter of jarring, blurred, and deceptive sights. She maintains a perpetual ability to see through all lies, illusions, and deceptions used against her, though she seems to have a particular vulnerability to radiance and fire.

In addition, Shelesorra either created or stole the Scepter of Silence, a deep-black artifact bound in spirals of demon-skin leather and topped with a bright-red sphere of pure arcane energy, capable of stilling the tongue of foes and rendering them temporarily or permanently mute as well as destroying the minds of lesser souls entirely. In this manner, she delights in destroying the songs of bards, the prayers of the faithful, and the arcana of wizards and sorcerers, leaving them with no words to call for help.



The arch-devil Belphegor (see *Creature Codex*) also maintains a court in a distant corner of Sooleeled (and seems to be allied with Parzelon and a rival of Shelesorra). His court is a place of maleficent constructs and devices, built and tended to by the inhabitants of Endekkor, a city full of tieflings and gnomes. Diabolical automatons and spiked walls, streets, and even taverns are common in Endekkor, a place more suited to barbed devils and spider fiends than anything else. Some believe that Belphegor has recently become enmeshed in studying the Void itself,

and that this explains his growing power over enormous undead such as death barques and bone colossi (see *Warlock* #15). It's unclear whether this is just the clack that he spreads about to warn off enemies while he lolls about in perpetual sloth and idleness.

11. CHUNDRESH, HUNTER'S HELL OF BLOOD AND FEAR

Chundresh is a place of dark forests and narrow ravines, of hilly uplands roamed by vast herds of hellish goats, peculiar black sheep, and red-eyed, white-furred deer. It is a place where predators roam free to kill for sport and for sustenance and where some souls are set loose in the bodies of prey, the better for them to be hunted, chased, and dragged down to a messy end.

While most of the plane of Chundresh is devoted to blood hunts, it does also have a few scattered cities and keeps, all devoted to the worship of the Hunter or to various demon lords of a similar stripe. The greatest of these cities is Verdano, a noisy place of hounds and leatherworkers, falconers and butchers. Its inhabitants are almost all tieflings with a scattering of trollkin and even orcs. They maintain large packs of hunting dogs, from hounds of the night to mastiffs and lich hounds, for the use of the lords and ladies of the hunt (almost all major cultists of the Hunter or impressive demons). Dog fights in the street are a common entertainment, and anyone who is without some form of guardian animal is treated as a servant (for servants are forbidden from owning animals in Verdano).

When not hunting game and souls, the lords and ladies of Chundresh hunt one another; this is more dangerous than game but also leads to greater status and greater prizes as each lord and lady has at least one and often dozens of small keeps and castles to defend. Small-scale raids, midnight ambushes, and everyday assassinations are common in Chundresh, and rare is the Chundran keep

that has not changed hands a dozen or a hundred times. A Chundran demon lord or arch-devil on the move from place to place is always accompanied by at least a few hundred fiends if travelling informally or an entire army on a more public round of visits to its holdings and estates. The use of body doubles and illusions is very common in Chundresh, and many of the illusions and transmutations used in this manner are purchased from the College of Subtle Mirrors or from Sooleled generally; the two planes share at least one major gate, the Reflecting Cloud. Entering it to traverse between the two planes has been described as somewhat akin to walking into a cloud of flesh-stripping flies and being vomited forth on the other end. Few mortals enjoy it.

Sleep and rest are quite difficult for non-natives on Chundresh. Each short rest brings a sense of unease as if something is watching. And indeed, often birds or other small, unnaturally colored animals will seem to observe creatures at rest and occasionally call with a peculiar whistling tone said to bring wolves, hounds, or hunters. Each long rest brings disturbing dreams of being chased, torn apart, and devoured by demons or other horrors—a successful DC 15 Constitution check is required for non-natives to rest successfully in Chundresh.

In Summary

While the Eleven Hells are home to sentient creatures and complex societies, they are hostile and xenophobic enough to ensure that travelers are unwelcome and visitors unwanted. True heroes and scholars might visit and survive long enough to bring some word of these places back to the mortal realms of Midgard and thus ensure that other travelers continue to avoid them. A grand tour of the Eleven Hells is, after all, far less of a joy than a grand tour of just about anywhere else in the multiverse.



ADVENTURE AND DUNGEONEERING



THE TOWN OF SMOKE

by David “Zeb” Cook

“Where is Smoketown? Gods blessings, that I cannot say. I don’t think anyone really knows where it is, but I can tell you how to find it. Just take the northeast road from here, and when you get to a big bend with a standing rock, look for a trail going more north. You follow that over the ridge, and once it goes into the mist, Smoketown will find you.

“But I must ask, why? Only the lost and fools go to Smoketown.”

—Deacon Tunburga Swinhall

Of all the towns and villages of the Shadow Realm, Smoketown is something different. True, it is home to an assortment of mismatched folk, mostly tieflings, just like other places. True, it is a backwater, just like many other places. And true, it is a marketplace, and there are many of those in the Shadow Realm. But Smoketown sells something no other town has—pathways to the Eleven Hells. Its most important goods are the services of the guides who make it home.

While the gates to the Eleven Hells are open to anyone, those are the gates for the dead and damned. Only the foolhardiest of mortals bang on these doorways, demanding entrance. Few do, and fewer still survive to regret it. No, to get in—and maybe out—of the hells safely requires a guide, someone who knows the secret pathways the demon and devils overlook. And the place to find those guides is Smoketown.

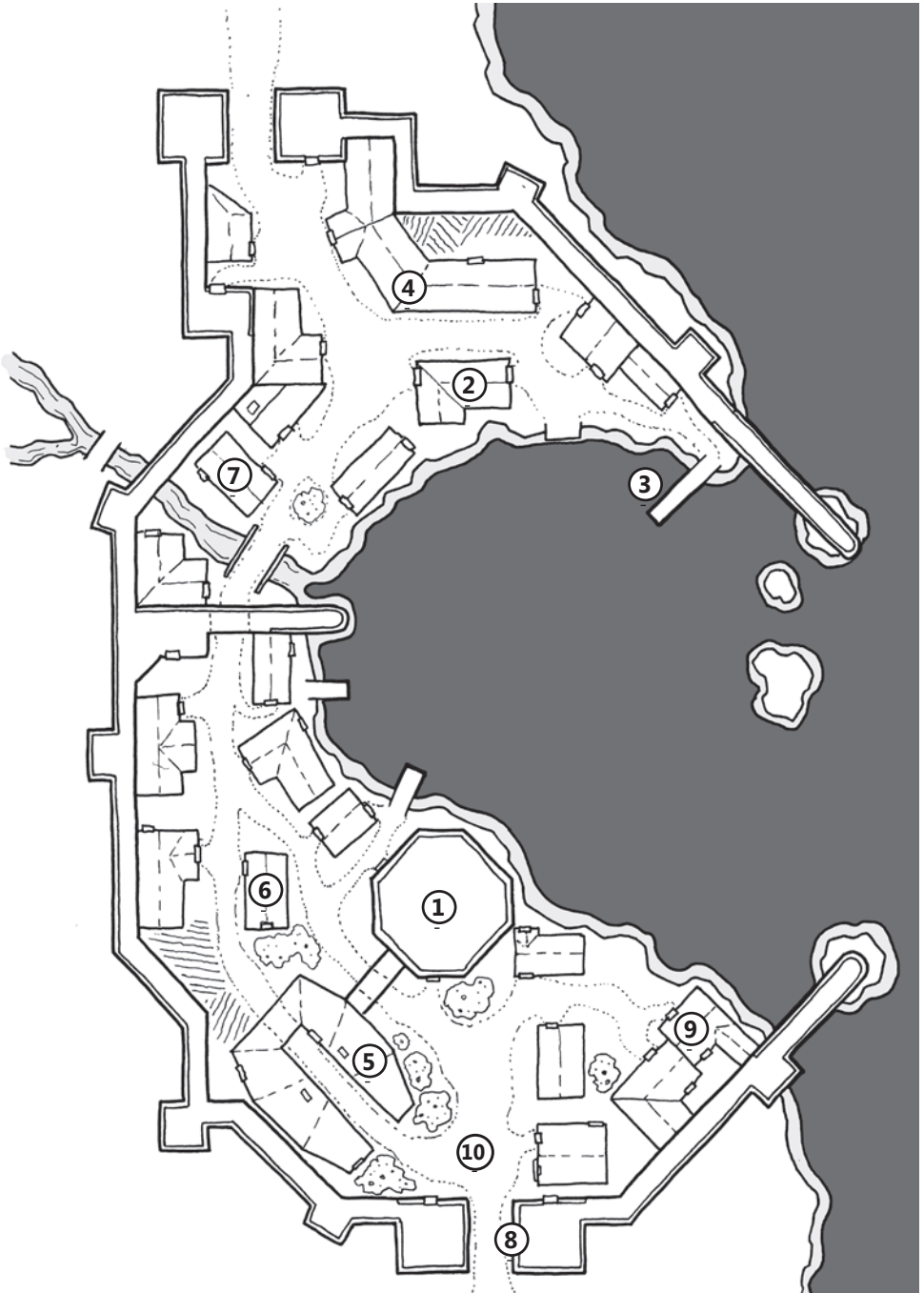
In addition to the guides or because of them, Smoketown draws the desperate and broken.

There are hell’s refugees and asylum seekers, broke and trapped; mad twisted dreamers, looking for dark enlightenment; con men, fortune hunters, and collectors of the grotesque and arcane; cults, good and foul, competing for the faithful; noble paladins, planning heroic raids; and even the occasional demon or devil on diplomatic duty.

Getting There

Sometimes called the “shifting village,” the “town in the mist,” or simply the “lost place,” Smoketown hovers in the indefinite border between the Shadow Realm and hell, all of the Eleven Hells. It borders all eleven or none at all, all at the same time. The geometaphysicians who have studied it say parts of the town, specifically the gateway and the road up to it, exist in the Shadow Realm while the rest of the town exists in a psychic no-man’s-land, a vague realm that touches all of the hells. Others disagree of course. They

ONE CONFIGURATION OF SMOKETOWN



say the town is a psychoresonant entity that responds to the yearnings of travelers. Thus it appears where it is needed or wanted and takes the traveler to where it thinks they belong.

Smoketown is able to appear anywhere on the border of the Shadow Realms and connects to various places in all of the Eleven Hells. Where exactly it exists is unknown as it is always shrouded behind a wall of mist and fog, but more so, its exact location in the Shadow Realm changes frequently, so finding it is never a simple case of following the directions used by the last traveler.

Through trial and error, seekers have settled on two ways to find Smoketown. Both are rituals of sorts. In the first, the traveler writes a contract expressing their Secret Desire—the passion that drives them to seek the hells in the first place. The contract must state the hell being sought and the fare the traveler is willing to pay. Fares can be almost anything: gold, magic, years of life, dreams, living sacrifices, knowledge, promises of future reward, or whatever seems suited to where the traveler is trying to go and the urgency of their journey. The contract is buried in the dark on a well-traveled path, and the petitioner waits. If everything was correctly worded and the price reasonable, an emissary contacts the person to settle the deal. The emissary may be almost anything: a raven, a one-legged man, a dream, a talking goat, a pattern in the fallen leaves, even a newborn child. There may be haggling over the price, but once that is settled, the emissary provides a place and time where Smoketown will be found.

Others say Smoketown can also be found by those who passionately need it even if they don't realize it. They claim Smoketown senses the desperate and opens a path to draw them in. When this happens, the traveler simply finds the town without ever realizing they were searching for it in the first place. The traveler has found their way to Smoketown

Whatever the method, the journey to Smoketown always leads the traveler to a trail

that will be gone the next time they pass by that way. The path winds through familiar to increasingly unfamiliar terrain. The land becomes shrouded in thick mist as it plunges forward. After an unexpected turn, bend, dip, or rise, Smoketown appears out of the nothing as if it had always been there.

Arrival

New arrivals are invariably greeted by a distinguished older man dressed as a seasoned warrior, possibly a nobleman. He introduces himself as the Captain, the master of Smoketown. If the town was summoned, the Captain produces the contract the player wrote and buried and politely asks for the payment. Once the payment is made, both sides mark the contract fulfilled. The Captain explains they are now free to find and hire a guide to continue their journey onward. If asked, he points people toward the First Hope Tavern as a good place to begin their search.

If for some reason the player refuses to honor their contract, the Captain will press them to change their mind. He warns they will not like the consequences but makes no overt threats or hostile moves. Instead he asks the players to come with him to the town square. Whether they come or refuse, he still goes to the square and stands under an ancient, hanging gibbet to read out their sentence.

“Citizens, by the voice of your Captain and the authority granted him, know that [name of the one sentenced] has refused just and legal payment for our services. Let no person provide guidance or charity until the proper payment has been made twice over. So the justice of Smoketown is declared!”

With that, he nails the contract to the gibbet pole, and the sentence is complete.

Once the sentence is passed, no one in Smoketown will agree to guide the sentenced out of town, regardless of their destination. Likewise, no one will offer them any free

lodging, food, or supplies. These things can be bought, but prices may be dear. The sentence will be lifted when the player(s) pay double whatever they promised in the contract.

Sometimes this is easy to figure out, but if not, the GM should make clear to the players what will fulfill the sentence. In no case should the GM present them with terms that are completely impossible to fulfill.

For players who arrive without a contract, strictly based on passionate need, the Captain greets them by name on their arrival. If questioned, he can explain that they have been embraced by Smoketown and that here they can find the service they need. The GM can use the Captain to provide semi-cryptic guidance to players who are unclear about why they are here and what they should do next.

If players attack the Captain, he and any guards with him will fight without mercy to the best of their ability.

Leaving

Getting out of Smoketown is no easier and possibly even harder than getting into Smoketown. The town's existence in a place that is neither here nor there makes it almost impossible not to get lost in the mist without a guide. That is the point of Smoketown; people come here to hire guides to lead them into whatever hell they want to visit. Trying to make that trip without a guide is foolishness.

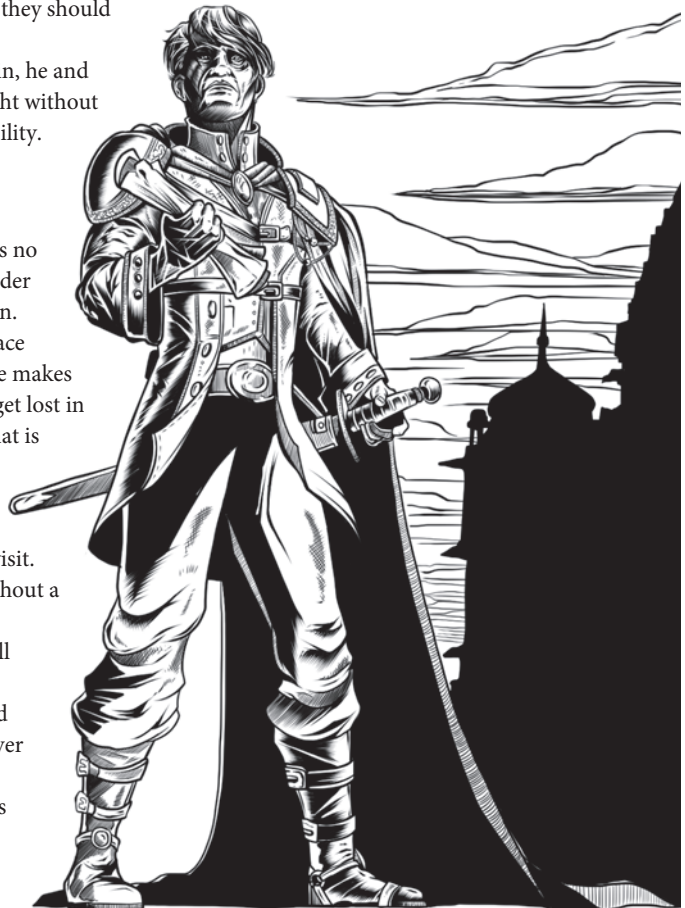
Of course, some people will be foolish. Those not under sentence can pick a road and plunge into the mist whenever they want. However, there are no road signs or markers to guide them once beyond the town. While the players

blunder around in the fog, the GM should determine where they eventually wind up by making a percentile check:

01–45	After 2–3 days of wandering, the group stumbles back into Smoketown. They have wandered in a great circle.
46–95	After a day's journey, the group arrives at a random* hell.
96–00	Through amazing luck, the group manages after two days of wandering to reach their desired destination.

*Random, of course, can mean a hell where the GM has an adventure ready to use.

For those under the Captain's sentence, leaving is even more difficult. No guide will



work for anyone under sentence. Those who leave without a guide will wander in the mist for 1–2 days only to return to Smoketown. No matter what precautions are taken, the result is always the same. Short of using extraordinary magical means, the only way to leave is to pay the Captain's fine and hire a guide.

Duels and Deals

Smoketown is home to and hosts a wide range of beings with beliefs ranging from self-righteous virtue to abhorrent evil. With such a mix, one might expect the town to be a field of open warfare. However, the opposite is the case. A tenuous understanding keeps all this from exploding into outright slaughter. It is an accepted tradition that Smoketown is a place of truce—except when it isn't.

Demons and devils love no one, even their own. The righteous fume about the evil around them. The vengeful see Smoketown as a place to settle scores. Therefore, knowing the nature of his visitors, the Captain turns a blind eye to dueling—provided some rules are followed.

- The duelist must formally challenge his target and establish a time and place. Simply attacking a foe in the middle of the street is a violation of this rule.
- The duel must be fought away from people and buildings. With wizard spells, breath attacks, and worse, the risk to others is too great. There are a number of accepted dueling grounds on the fringes of town, even fitted with pavilions for spectators.
- The duel must be one-on-one. This is to prevent large mob battles from erupting.

The Captain and his guards will arrest anyone who defies these basic rules. It may take time and effort to arrest a demon lord intent on destroying the town, but the Captain will persist.

Because the town is a mixing point for folks noble and vile, it also serves as a neutral ground for those times when two sides must

sit down face-to-face. There are times when a celestial arrives on one road while an archdemon enters by another. These meetings are carefully planned in advance and the Captain makes special effort to make sure everything goes smoothly.

The Town

First-time visitors often gape at the collection of diabolic souls who live in Smoketown. Depending on the visit, the town has 200–500 residents. The majority are tieflings who have found occupations and shelter here. The next largest group are humans, followed by trollkin, shadow fey, gnolls, dragonkin, dhampir, elves, and elfmarked. Dwarves, gnomes, halflings, gearforged, kobolds, and others are rare.

Travelers who have been here more than once are amazed that the streets and buildings of Smoketown are completely different from visit to visit. It may on one visit be a walled hamlet with well-made stone buildings and on the return trip be a sprawling, defenseless village of mud-brick buildings. Each time a traveler arrives, the layout of streets, the placement of buildings, even the very nature of the town is different.

Still, elements of Smoketown remain unchanged even if appearances are altered. There is always a river or stream that runs through or past the town, and it is always plied by boats bringing goods and travelers. The businesses and homes are always present—there is always the First Hope Tavern, the Captain's Manor, the Gibbet, the Smoke Gate, and others. The buildings will look different and be in different places, but the inhabitants will be the same.

The locals do not find this unusual, and many aren't even aware that their surroundings are different. It is not clear when the change happens since the town never seems to alter its appearance while the player characters are staying there.

Collecting travelers' reports, there appear to be eleven different configurations of Smoketown. These are:

1. A stereotypical human town, walled with a single gate, half-timbered buildings with shingled roofs.
2. A walled town with mud-brick buildings laid out in a very rectangular grid.
3. A ramshackle collection of wooden buildings and shacks within a rotting wooden palisade.
4. A collection of tribal huts surrounding an old temple.
5. A village of stone-and-thatch buildings enclosed in an earthen wall ring.
6. An unwalled village of elaborately carved wooden buildings with high-peaked roofs and dragon-headed ridgepoles.
7. A prosperous town of brick buildings and cobbled streets inside a crumbling ancient stone wall.
8. A landscape of crystalline buildings with sharp edges lit in smoky blue hues.
9. A walled town of ancient, polished stone buildings with a majestic but crumbling plaza at the center.
10. A town of mildewed townhouses where the streets are all canals crisscrossed by bridges.
11. A log-walled stockade with thick timber blockhouses, enclosing wood-and-hide lodges.

Metaphysicians have tried to calculate if the town's appearance is linked to whichever hell is nearest and if the town maintains a fixed order to the hells it visits. Unfortunately, knowing both of these things requires going to each hell and coming back, sometimes repeatedly—something no scholar has yet managed to do.

In play, it is best to have at least two different town layouts, even if the players only expect to visit Smoketown once. However,

it is not necessary to map every iteration of Smoketown. Simply describe the look of the buildings using one from the list above and keep the locations vague. "Down the street" or "across town" is enough to provide directions without requiring an exact survey.

Guide to Smoketown

Regardless of the layout, the town will always have the following locations. The buildings are described in general terms of size and purpose along with suggested appearances for different manifestations of Smoketown.

1. THE CAPTAIN'S HALL

The Captain's Hall is always one of the largest and most important buildings in Smoketown, as befits the lord of this strange village. Here the Captain both lives and manages the daily business of ruling Smoketown. Regardless of form, the hall always has a space where the Captain receives ambassadors and hears the day's cases if there are any. In addition, there will be a small armory, his private quarters, kitchen, and at least one storeroom. Depending on the town configuration, there may be additional rooms or outbuildings for guards, servants, and special guests.

- The Hall is an unadorned stone keep with a great set of iron-clad doors and arrow slits in the walls. The building is three stories tall with a main feasting hall overlooked by an upper gallery and many side rooms.
- The Hall is a grand tribal building built on stilts, so it stands 6 feet off the ground. A swooping palm-leaf roof has wide eaves to protect from the sun and rain. Lavish rattan weavings cover the floors and walls where the Captain receives visitors, eats, and sleeps.
- The Hall is the best of the leaky shacks that make up the town. Worn cowhide covers the holes in the roof. Inside there

are benches and stools around a warming central firepit. In the shadows are sleeping mats, baskets, and chests.

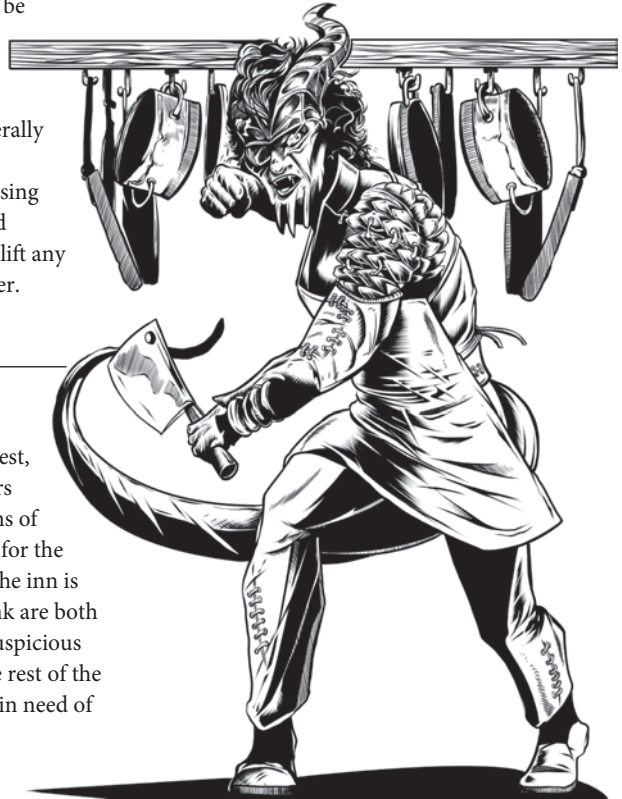
The Captain is a human man, grim and heartless but scrupulously proper. He enforces and is part of the unstated laws that govern Smoketown. He is a classic tyrant with absolute power over Smoketown and a dedication to protect it. While his judgements are harsh, they are scrupulously fair by Smoketown standards. He adheres to the absolute letter of the law regardless of the suffering this causes the guilty or the innocent. He has never been known to display favoritism or mercy and has a well-earned reputation for being incorruptible.

The Captain is a powerful fighter of indeterminate level. He should provide a severe challenge to any group that threatens him, always being at least equal to them if not better in power. However, he is not invulnerable or unkillable—he can be defeated by those with enough skill and luck. If he is killed, he will reappear the next morning as if nothing had happened. He literally holds no grudge or ill-will against anyone who kills him, at most advising his killers their efforts are futile and unproductive. Killing him will not lift any sentence he set on a player character.

2. BY-WATER INN

Always located on the town's riverbank, the By-Water Inn is Smoketown's only, and thereby finest, inn. It provides lodging for travelers and some permanent guests, victims of the Captain's sentence still looking for the way to pay their sentence. Overall the inn is less-than-stellar. The food and drink are both thin and sour, the staff cross and suspicious of all their guests. Regardless of the rest of the town, the inn buildings are always in need of repair and cleaning.

- This is a traditional half-timbered building in clear need of repairs. The mud-and-wattle walls are cracked, and large chunks of the plaster have fallen away in places. The place is a maze of little rooms, most windowless, on a variety of floors and uneven hallways. The main room is dingy and overheated with soot-stained glass windows that barely let any light in.
- The dusty mud-brick inn's main room is a cantina with bare dirt floors and a mismatched collection of tables and benches. The second floor is mostly two large rooms where a traveler can rent a pallet on the floor. A few private rooms have doors that don't latch and windows without any glass or coverings.
- This crystal building has seen better days. The walls are marked by spiderweb cracks and unwashed grime that diminish the



luster of the crystal. Throughout there are too many sharp-edged projections for anyone to sit comfortably anywhere.

The landlord is a one-eyed, one-horned tiefling man named Holst Nactwier, as surly a host as one might ever find. He seems to actively resent all his guests and believes every one of them is trying to cheat him in some way. His only concern is to be paid upfront at whatever gouging price he can get. Complaints about the inn's cleanliness, bad food, lack of service, or anything else are met with a churlish snort and the offer to throw "your ungrateful hide" out into the street. Nor is his partner, an elf woman named Twiletta, any better—shrill, sharp-tongued, and altogether un-elflike. She is quick to flourish a boning knife as a way to make her point clear.

3. THE QUAY/DOCKS/LANDING PLACE

Located on the river, the docks are only used by boats carrying travelers in and out. Mostly deserted, especially at night, the docks are a popular place for clandestine meetings with guides, infernal agents, and robbers. It can be hard to tell one of these from the others.

The docks, regardless of the town's appearance, always look like standard docks appropriate to the rest of the town.

4. FIRST HOPE TAVERN

The tavern is always located near the Smoke Gate, ready to greet new arrivals. No matter the appearance of the town, the First Hope Tavern sports religious items that are the antithesis of the Eleven Hells. The yard in front of the tavern is a thicket of protective idols, lucky horseshoes, warding posts, spirit bundles, painted charms, and inspiring holy symbols.

- The building is a long, wooden mead hall. The path to the door is lined by holy iconography while the doorposts and lintels are carved with protective prayers of many different religions.



- The tavern is a simple outdoor space with shade-providing trees. A small shack serves as the storeroom and bar front. Charms and icons hang from the branches of the trees over the guests.
- Amid the dingy shacks of the town, the tavern is notably clean and well-repaired, making it one of the few solid structures in the town. Inside the warmly lit main salon, the walls are lined with protective idols. Paper charms are plastered over the door and window frames, doing more than keeping out drafts.

The tavern is run by o-Gromma Hakkir, a dragonborn. He is elderly and needs a cane to

get about but is still filled with determination and hope. His body shows the scars of battles fought long ago, but as o-Gromma readily admits, those days are long past. Big of body and spirit, o-Gromma presides over the tavern with gruff good cheer and a devout reverence for the “noble” gods. He is open with his advice and counsel for those who seek it and often teaches new travelers the ropes of Smoketown.

His staff is a collection of the trapped and the lost—travelers needing a job before they can move on or those under sentence who find comfort and understanding from the old dragonborn. It is clear he cares for their well-being. What he does not tolerate though are slackers and con men. Those hoping to take advantage of his generosity often find themselves hustled out the door at the point of his sword.

5. THE CARAVAN YARD

This is the arrival and departure point for the large overland caravans that sometimes pass through Smoketown. Thus it is a good location to gather information on the route ahead and the latest news from the hells. It is run by the tiefling Missara Curved-Blade. Running one of the few successful businesses in town, she keeps a close watch on the comings and goings of all strangers—and more than a few of the guides. Realistic and hard-nosed, she is very guarded, but those who prove themselves worthy of her trust are rewarded with her guidance and insights as to the reliability of the various guides and mercenaries found in the town, along with their schemes and secret alliances.

- The business consists of a large stable, able to house 30 or more animals, along with an attached corral where more beasts can be kept. Missara maintains a small office just inside the stable doors.

- The caravanserai is a single large building with only two heavily barred gates. Inside is a large courtyard where the animals care kept. Surrounding this are two stories of galleries with rooms for supplies, gear, trade goods, and sleeping for the caravan crews.
- It is a stone plaza on the edge of town, dominated by a magical fountain with the power to refresh the weary and restore stamina for the long journeys ahead. Outbuildings line the plaza—stables, ordered by beast, plus warehouses, flop rooms, and fodder cribs.

6. FERISSON SMITHY

Run by a pair of hill dwarf brothers, Kelka and Trav Ferisson, this small ironworks provides the needs of Smoketown and the travelers that pass through. The brothers came here to make their fortune and they are well on their way. Kelka, the older, is a sharp dealer who will never give a discount to even a loyal customer. Trav does most of the work at the forge and seldom has a kind word to share with anyone although he can spare time for those who know anything of infernal smithing. His metalwork is not amazing but good enough for Smoketown.

- It is a stone shed with a massive forge and a bellows powered by a water sluice drawn from the river. A coal bunker fills the rest of the space and Trav’s anvils sit under an awning out front.
- The forge is a clay pit in a dusty courtyard surrounded by mounds of coal and wood. Large flat stones serve as anvils, and reed mats are Trav’s workbenches.
- Built into the hollow of a great dead tree, forge smoke has charred the interior of the natural chimney to the point where it can no longer burn. Nearby, a fine building of wood and iron serves as the workshop and shop front for the brothers.

7. THE OLD TEMPLE

It is hard to know which god was served by this crumbling old ruin. Once it was a modest but fine structure to a deity of good will and intentions, but whatever symbols it bore are long missing. Were they removed or were they defaced? There are signs and suggestions that either could be true. The grounds still carry a faint aura of good, but there is also a strong trace of evil. Was the temple attacked and overrun? Abandoned? Desecrated? Or is it a steadfast reminder that even here goodness can be found?

- The ruin is little more than a few wooden poles, burnt long ago and moldering with age. The altar, carved from a single massive log, still remains, charred but solid.
- Clearly this was once a small but soaring crystal structure. Now it lies in a jumble of broken shards with only the archway of the main entrance still standing.
- Once it was a small clay-brick ziggurat with elaborate decorations on the sides. Time and weather have eroded these to be almost unrecognizable. The ritual brazier at the top still stands with signs of recent ashes.

Still, the ruin is not abandoned. A tiefling cleric, Manar Inkala, has a small hovel near the ruin. He is ragged and wild-haired. He speaks in cryptic phrases and lies more than he tells the truth. Most in town figure he is mad—just another of the lost who have drifted into Smoketown. In truth, Manar is a cleric of Sarastra with a particular passion to use his divine skills

of deceit to save the lost from the treacheries found in Smoketown. Those who can decipher his twisting wordplay and riddles can learn useful advice about the guides in town—who knows a true path and who is likely to lead their client into an ambush.

8. THE SMOKE GATE

No matter what form the town takes, there is always the Smoke Gate at the road leading into town. It marks the boundary between Smoketown and frayed edges of whatever lies



beyond, Shadow Realm or one of the hells. The gate serves a powerful protective function for the town because the gate can only be found by those who live in Smoketown or have made a contract with the Captain, and no one can properly enter Smoketown except through the gate. It is believed that the ghosts sometimes seen in the streets are the images of those who skirted the gate on their way in.

- The Smoketown gate is a stout stone structure with heavy, banded doors protected by a wrought-iron portcullis of snakes and flames. The Captain's banner hangs over the top of the archway.
- The gate is a living archway of thorny vines. The wilted flowers and brown leaves don't reveal what plant this is or was. A sign for Smoketown hangs at the top in the faded blooms.
- The gate is a massive bronze door decorated with lapis lazuli and gilded designs. It is set in a wall and flanked by two polished marble pillars flying the banners of the Captain and the town.

9. THE SOUL MILL

At the bank of the river is the second-oldest building in Smoketown—a water-powered grist mill. Day and night, the stone wheel turns without stop whether there is anything to grind or not. The villagers do bring their grain here to turn into flour and meal, but it's known that the miller has other goods to sell.

The mill is owned and run by Hezapah, a spawn of Parzelon. If asked why she is here, she tells a tale of how she angered Parzelon and was banished to the Shadow Realm. After much wandering, she found her way here. Unable to go closer to home, she has settled in Smoketown and is making the best of it. Why a miller? The mill was available, and the job is easy, according to her.

Of course, nobody else in town believes a word of it. The popular theory is that Hezapah is still serving the Lord of Secrets by passing

on information she learns to her infernal lord. Supporting this theory, she is particularly well-informed about visitors to Smoketown along with any sentences the Captain has pronounced.

For a devil spawn of the Lord of Secrets, she is cheerful, talkative, and helpful, especially to those who cannot pay the Captain's fines. For those willing to pay her price, Hezapah can persuade the Captain to modify his sentence. Whatever secrets she knows, the Captain is determined to keep them hidden. Her price varies by person. It may be a secret of great power or it may be a soul. Whatever is paid, she casts it upon the millstone and makes it forever hers.

- The wooden building's mossy walls shudder slightly as the great water wheel turns. With each turn, the gears slowly thump as the stones grind together.
- An isolated tower stands on an island in the river. Driven by water powered gears, the tower steadily turns, the entire base acting as a millstone.
- The rhythmic beat of hammers resounds from the brick building on the bank. The wheel turns the clockwork gears that drive this hammer mill.

10. THE GIBBET

This skeletal structure where prisoners are caged and hung exposed to the elements day and night is always at the center of Smoketown, regardless of its configuration. Furthermore, it's appearance never changes—an ironbound cage hung from a crossbeam that gently twists and swings at the slightest breeze. Sometimes it is empty but more often occupied. It might be a traveler pleading for mercy, a minor demon who dared to challenge the Captain's power, a rotting corpse, or a raving madman. Whatever is inside is held by powerful wards woven into the very metal of the cage.



The gibbet is reserved for criminals caught in Smoketown, mostly murderers and thieves. They are sentenced by the Captain and caged in the gibbet until their sentence is served. It might be several days exposure or to remain in the cage, without food or water, until dead. The townsfolk know better than to release anyone sentenced to the gibbet. That is another serious crime in the Captain's ledger sheet. Yet that does not prevent them from hiring or tricking adventurers into staging a breakout. That would certainly mean the adventurers committed the crime and not their would-be employer.

On the gibbet post are contracts for travelers currently under the Captain's sentence. They can be read by anyone. It may be that a group of adventurers has the means to pay off a trapped traveler's sentence. Who knows what might come of that?

The Guides

The entire point of Smoketown is to find a guide. This should be simple. There are plenty of guides here, but finding a reliable one is another matter. They range from trustworthy to treacherous and none of them know the paths to every hell.

THERE ARE TEN GUIDES IN SMOKETOWN.

THENA FARROW

Tiefling (7th-level ranger), neutral evil

Paths Known:

Archedantuss (Riverine Hell of the Styx & Lethe), Urgennos (Luminous Hell of Fire and Sulfur)

Thena is a sharp-eyed scout with distinctive flowing horns that make up for her short stature and a blunt way with people. She knows her way around, but if she thinks a group is going to get her killed, she has no problem ditching them to their fate. She will feel bad about it later... while she is alive and having a drink at the First Hope Tavern.

KLAUS MUELLER

Human (6th-level sorcerer), lawful neutral

Paths Known:

Bzeletalet (Buzzing Hell of Insects), Efrizarr (Frozen Hell of Ice and Silence)

Klaus describes himself as a man who has freed himself from the bonds of ordinary society. Others describe him as a lazy, no-ambition bum. After years of barely getting by as an adventurer, he somehow found himself in Smoketown where he discovered a talent for finding the paths through the mist. Not a natural planner, his preparation is mostly, "Don't worry. Everything will work out." The rest is all "Everybody run!" when trouble breaks out.

YOUMA ADAMIZ KA'MOURA'TA GARA

Elfmarked (5th-level cleric), lawful good

Paths Known:

Qes-al-Marit (Shifting Hell of Darkness and Bone Dunes), Snorecksubo (Lingering Hell of Plagues)

Abandoned as a child, Youma has grown up with an intense desire to protect and help the lost and forlorn, which has naturally led him to Smoketown. Devoutly religious

and intensely concerned for others, his first reaction to those who try to hire him is to try talking them out of their journey. On the road, he has good intentions but is not the best at following through on his plans.

GREGOR THE BALD

Human (6th-level wizard), lawful neutral

Paths Known:

Archedantuss (Riverine Hell of the Styx & Lethe), Emwabbik Em (Alien Hell of the Acid Abyss)

Gregor is one of those people who always manages to see the worst in any situation, even when things are going well. Although extremely skilled and competent, he is plagued by self-doubts and does not see his own ability. He is a meticulous organizer but becomes extremely stressed when things do not go according to plan.

MALKAS

Tiefling (8th-level fighter), neutral

Paths Known:

Bzeletalet (Buzzing Hell of Insects), Fleggesun (Fetid Hell of Cannibal Rot)

Loud to the point of obnoxiousness and oblivious to the feelings of those around him, Malkas is a hard tiefling to love. Fortunately, most of the time he is happy and good-natured, but he is quick to take insult when challenged. His talents as a guide are far less than he believes them to be, but he is a trustworthy sword when things get dicey.

BRIGID NO-MAN

Trollkin (8th-level fighter), neutral good

Paths Known:

Nakhol (Vanishing Hell of Ignorance), Snorecksubo (Lingering Hell of Plagues)

Abravely sarcastic and half-drunk most of the time, Brigid is a surprisingly reliable and effective guide. Although she puts up a tough

front, she has a weak spot for families and especially children. This is matched by her burning hatred of slavers. If the story can be coaxed out of her, player characters might learn she takes only the most dangerous and high-paying guide runs to earn enough money to buy her daughter out of bondage.

HAMILSCAR NORAND

Shadow fey (6th-level rogue), chaotic evil

Paths Known:

Emwabbik Em (Alien Hell of the Acid Abyss), Qes-al-Marit (Shifting Hell of Darkness and Bone Dunes), Sooleleed (Mirror Hell of Lies)

Charming but treacherous, Hamilscar is a complete and experienced liar. Careful to appear as a guide of modest skill, he keeps apart from other guides—who well know his true nature. He presents himself as studious in his guide occupation, but once he leads a group into the mist, his goal to take them to a camp of his brethren. There his clients will be stripped of their possessions and dumped to fend for themselves, unarmed, in the hostile wilderness. Or killed if necessary. If Hamilscar is caught in his ruse, he can be forced to guide the party properly, though he will attempt to escape at the first opportunity.

TAMININO

Gnome (6th-level fighter), neutral evil

Paths Known:

Chundresh (Hunter's Hell of Blood and Fear), Fleggesun (Fetid Hell of Cannibal Rot)

Taminino is a skinny little fellow, perpetually badly shaven and dressed in patchy clothes and armor. This is not from poverty but extreme frugality. He almost never speaks. If these odd habits were not enough, he has the unsettling habit of staring at people when he thinks they aren't looking, abruptly looking away when noticed. He clearly does not seem to like anyone, simmering with some unstated resentment that he mutters under his breath when he thinks he is out of hearing range. Still

he is a good guide for those who can tolerate his personality.

"BUCK" VYGER

Gearforged (7th-level paladin), lawful good

Paths Known:

Chundresh (Hunter's Hell of Blood and Fear), Nakhol (Vanishing Hell of Ignorance), Urgennos (Luminous Hell of Fire and Sulfur)

Buck is a model of quiet virtue, honorable but not naive. He is not overly friendly though. Indeed, most consider him grumpy. He often mutters displeasure about the "unnatural arrangements" of Smoketown. He is selective about who he works for, not accepting contracts with those whose motives he thinks are suspect. Even if not hired, he will try to help earnest travelers by warning them away from unreliable guides and offering advice to better prepare for the journey ahead.

HELNA GRASS-SCALE ("THE LOST LIZARD")

Dragonborn (commoner), lawful neutral

Paths Known:

Efrizarr (Frozen Hell of Ice and Silence), Sooleleed (Mirror Hell of Lies)

Helena is the most unlikely of guides, a simple woman, albeit dragonborn, with a talent for guiding through the most dangerous lands. How she came here and why she stays is a mystery although her mossy-tinged scales betray her green dragon ancestry. The work does not seem to bring her any joy as Helna always seems fearful of the job and intimidated by the adventurers she leads. Some think her successes are pure luck, but she's wily and uses her weaknesses to her advantage. She goes to great lengths to avoid discovery and especially fighting. She knows the ways not patrolled, the places to hide in the muck, where the dimwitted sentries are, how to cower like a peasant not worth the trouble of killing, and when to flatter the powerful. On the road, she has no pride and will do whatever it takes to escape notice.

THE DOOM IN THE PILLARS

by Basheer Ghouse

A thousand years ago, the City of Pillars was a wondrous thing.

Look! Its marble palaces, sprawling estates riddled with luxury. Look! Its great gardens, their free fruits and enchanted delights. Look! Its lofty pillars, carrying entire districts, their roofs spread like the branches of a great tree. Look! The Tree of the City, tall and majestic, green growth entwining its branches. Look! The ankheg guards, eyes milky white, great feelers protecting the citizens and accepting their scraps. Look! Its benevolent king, organic crown upon regal frame, dispensing justice and wisdom to all who ask.

Look!

That tree is not a tree. That guard is not a guard. That king is not a king.

Look! The vines are a parasite. They have killed the tree, drained its life, and feast upon its corpse. It stands only for they are there, maintaining the facade. Look! The guard is blind, the infection has taken its sight, terrible worms live in its mouth, extending as feelers, stealing meals from its gut. Look! The crown is a growth. Its roots bury in the king's spine, in his skull. It directs his thoughts and works his mouth, and when the sun is bright, when his children speak to him, when the growth is weak, he realizes what he has become, and he weeps.

That tree is Iram. That guard is Iram. That king is Iram.

Look! The rot is bone deep. It runs the length of the pillars, infests the walls, the water. Every delight is poisoned, every tile hides a malignant cancer. Underneath the boots of the beloved are untold trodden souls.

Look!

The City of Pillars was not a city. The city was Iram. That the gods murdered it was a mercy.

The History of the Pillars

North of the road from Siwal to Prezhan, in the great wastes of the Sarklan Desert that separates the hungry Mharoti Empire from Nuria Natal, lies the Field of the Lost Army. It is named for the Mharoti legion that died there, swallowed by the sands. And it surrounds the ruins of Iram, the City of Pillars.

Today, the city is barely visible, subsumed almost entirely by sand-swept dunes and barren rock. Tower heads and shattered pillars litter the sands. An intrepid traveler might be warned away by the occasional corpse, abandoned camp, or gnawed bones of a qutrub's victims.

Or they might continue. They might pierce the ruins, seeking the center of the city, the thing that begat so many legends. They may find the Pit. Yawning, greedy, sand dribbling

down its maw, light fading into unending, untextured black. The far-away bounce of a dropped stone forestalling further exploration.

That which you see, above the sands, is the barest tips of the city of pillars. The uppermost towers of its outermost rings. To see more, to explore its splendor, one must descend beneath the sands and unearth its buried majesty. Perhaps you go through one of the towers, digging through layers of sand and earth, marveling at its ever-greater depth, crumbling architecture now supported by endless rock. Perhaps you bring rope and light and careful preparation, and you rappel into the yawning dark. Perhaps you have magic, fly into the depths with night-seeing goggles and well-adapted eyes.

Then, only then, do you see the wonders that were—do you see the truth to the legend told in every culture in the Southlands, every city in the Mharoti Empire, every monastery in Khandiria and the east. The details differ, but the truth at its core is this.

The Sarklan was not always a desert.

When the city was at its peak, when the oldest histories were young and the elves still resplendent, it bloomed.

Clear rivers flowed through the sands. Fields of lentils, abundant date palms, and ancient olive trees sprawled the countryside. The streets were wide and clean, and impossible pillars supported great fields of towers that stretched skyward.

It was a city of superlatives. Its soldiers stronger, scholars smarter, priests wiser, merchants richer than its neighbors. Its monarchs were icons of stability and authority, and any challenge to its hegemony was met with great and furious repudiation.

It was paradise. It was hegemon. It was a lie.

Beneath the splendor, in the shadows of its impossible pillars and sprawling palaces, were the poor of the city, and they suffered, and they saw what others did not. The *thing* infesting the architecture, the soldiers, the scholars. The thing that took the great and

broke them. They saw Iram, and they wept for the brethren they could not help.

In the reign of a wise and just king of the city, one of these poor souls went so far as to throw themselves at his feet, begging for relief. The tales differ, and no history of that place now exists. Perhaps it was a father bereaved of his child. Perhaps it was a daughter whose lover had risen above her station and been taken by Iram. Perhaps it was simply an idealistic, desperate person with no idea how to help their fellows save to appeal to whatever remained of their king.

They died but not in vain.

The king was young and not yet entirely gone. He was conscious for an hour each day, at sunset, when the monster in his flesh and in his crown was drowsy and allowed him to do as he wished. Many of his ancestors had attempted to end their own torment during this time, few had succeeded.

Instead, the king visited the tree.

The tree was the project of generations. A grand thing at the city's center, growing with infinitesimal slowness and covered in fungal growth. It was a young World Tree, gone horribly wrong. It was the grand project of the city, housed within a great temple and only seen by those within the monster's grasp.

The king went to the tree and laid his hands upon it and in his final moments of lucidity uttered a prayer to any god who might listen.

And one answered.

People lie as to whom or do not know. Many gods in Nuria Natal eagerly take credit. The Mharoti make it a point of pride that Baal was responsible. Others claim that Dyjj himself smote the city for what it did.

It does not matter who did it.

What matters is what happened.

Iram was scourged from everything it had inhabited in the city and its lands. Every pillar, every building, every rock, stone, blade, and cloth. Each of its victims and, most importantly, the tree itself. It was left with nothing save the idols from whence it came.

Light could be seen from miles away, and an unearthly, keening scream would be heard in dreams for centuries, driving victims to violence and endless ambition.

Those beneath its notice or too young to infest fled. Fled as it was scoured, root and branch, from every part of their city. Everyone and everything else—from the king to the fields and clear rivers of the Sarklan—died.

And ever since, the city has sat undisturbed. Scarcely worth looting.

Until, of course, Meskhenit killed a Mharoti legion atop its corpse.

Iram

The monster's name is Iram. It is ancient, powerful, and alive still. It is fundamentally a parasite.

Iram's deepest desire is to become a new Yggdrasil. To flower a new World Tree and infest it. Become a power source of all the most potent beings in the many worlds and in doing so make them part of itself. Perhaps it imagines itself a new World Serpent, ready to birth from the husk of this world.

Fortunately, it can only act via pawns. People who have accepted its deals, allowed it into themselves and their possessions. Their wills twisted to its purpose until they become a mere extension of it. Once this was its strength, allowing it to control the City of Pillars without outside scrutiny. Now it is a weakness, leaving it starving to death in a ruin without means to act.

However, the Lost Legion has given it an opportunity. A single survivor, willing to do anything to keep living, and bait to draw in more prey. A chance, however slim, to escape the City of Pillars.

Running Iram

Iram always presents itself as a figure who wants to further the goals of the great and whose price for helping you is allowing it to help you. It is interested in the ambitious,

proud, and powerful and has little interest in the humble. It only makes deals with adults of intelligent species.

Iram may offer a willing creature a blessing or charm or may offer the functional equivalent of a *regeneration*, *greater restoration*, or *heal* spell. A character in dire straits, of particular interest, or who has already accepted several favors may receive an epic boon.

In the short-term, Iram's goal is to infest more people and to get at least one *Clay Idol of Iram* out of the City of Pillars. It will tailor all of its actions and bargains toward making this happen and hopes to paint the idols as immensely valuable treasure rather than a vector for infection.

A creature that allows Iram to help it directly becomes infested by Iram. Iram may influence the target's actions as if it were a sentient magic item with a charisma of 18. If the target allows Iram to affect an animal, item, or object that they possess, that object is treated as the sentient magic item instead. Iram may communicate with anyone within a quarter mile of any creature or item it has infested.

Iram generally tries to avoid conflict with those it has infested, instead offering additional favors. Each favor furthers the infestation until, at five favors, two years of infestation, or a point of the GM's choosing, the infested creature loses all free will and becomes an extension of Iram. This build up should be gradual.

A creature that has become an extension of Iram changes their type and subtype to aberration (Iram). Their charisma changes to 18, and they gain proficiency in Deception if they did not have it. Additionally, fungal growths or wormlike protrusions begin to emerge from their body. Iram is a skilled manipulator and pretends to be a victim to the best of its ability.

A creature that is infested but retains its free will can purge Iram by dying and being returned to life or through burning out the

infection with a series of DC 20 medicine checks equal to twice the number of favors it has accepted or the number of months it has been infested, whichever is greater. Each attempt at a medicine check deals 3d6 fire damage to the infested. All checks must be completed within an hour.

Unfortunately, freeing yourself of Iram is not the end. The infestation is physical, as fungal fiber and chthonic carapace augment muscle and bone. Upon being cured, the formerly infected suffers a penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks as if they had been raised from the dead, with the same duration. This stacks with any penalties if they are raised from the dead.

Hooks to Seek the City

Need a hook to bring your adventure to Iram? Try these:

- Scavengers have sent word to the Mharoti Empire that Azhad the Red still lives. The sultan is keenly interested in the potential survival and rescue of a trueborn dragon.
- Iram's Great Library is believed to contain knowledge thought lost to time, including information the party desperately needs. They must seek it out to find what they are searching for.
- Something is horribly wrong with the ley lines, and a great sage believes it is related to the cataclysm that destroyed Iram. The party must investigate for clues as to what drove the ley lines from that ancient place and if it might happen again.
- An idol from Iram has entered the magical curiosities market and is linked to rapidly ascending fortunes and bizarre behavior. While the client investigates the market, the players are to travel to Iram and see if they might learn about it.

Faheleel

Faheleel is a small trading town built at a crossroads and oasis between Gizmiri Province and Siwal. It has a thriving, illicit market in battlefield salvage, and as it sits on the only route through the Sarklan Desert, it hosts a constant stream of trade caravans heading in either direction.

The people are friendly, welcoming, and wildly diverse. A cross-section of Nuria Natal and the Mharoti Empire in demographic, language, and architecture. There is an expectation that travelers are to spend money freely here and that the competing interests of their neighbors will keep Faheleel independent.

LOCATIONS AND PEOPLE IN FAHELEEL

Faheleel always seems to be changing as travelers come and go and new discoveries constantly find their way into town.

ANTHROPOLOGIST'S ARCHIVE

This large, squat building is home to Asra, a human veteran and head of Faheleel's budding anthropological society. She is a pale-skinned Mharoti woman who normally wears concealing, colorful clothes and a red hijab. Her association has been researching the history of various ruins and the peoples who lived in them for some time, and the uptick in battlefield looting and associated artifacts has resulted in an interest in the City of Pillars.

While she does not know about the creature Iram, she knows quite a bit about the culture of the city and its history and is eager to tell the players that Iram probably wasn't its original name and that the city was once famous for its magical automatons and djinn-trapping vessels. She is interested in further artifacts and information from the city and will pay well for anything delivered to her.

Characters on good terms with Asra can get access to the archives, either for free or a nominal fee, depending on how well they are liked. The archives have the following information on the City of Pillars:

- Iram was the earliest producer of *djinn vessels*, ancient idols and containers that could trap genies.
- Iram was an ancient city, destroyed in a long-forgotten cataclysm at the end of a period of profound social change and upheaval. It fell at the height of its power and refugees fled to what are now the Mharoti Empire and Nuria Natal.
- Ancient cults believed that Iram was ritually unclean and banned all travel within fifty miles of it, which is why the roads through the Sarklan Desert avoided it even before the ghosts of dead legionnaires infested the area.
- Impressive magical constructs known as pillar guardians were once produced in Iram. Few examples survive to this day, but they are believed to have been more intelligent than golems.

BURIAL DETAIL

Faheleel's graveyard is a massive thing some distance away from the town proper. It is dominated by a tall stone building in the Mharoti style, the words Burial Detail carved in massive letters above its entrance. It is run by Vaizal, a Mharoti kobold priest whose life's work has been to recover and bury the remains of the Lost Legion. He has financial support from home and also runs the town's graveyard as a side business, though the town's graves are a tiny proportion of what's buried out back. He is willing to pay thirty gold for every set of remains, or legionary shield and helm, that is delivered to the detail from Iram.

He is especially interested in the remains of the red dragon Azhad. He was killed when Meskhenit turned the legion, but his body was never found and the abundance of undead and necromantic qutrub in the region makes

Vaizal fear the worst. He will pay handsomely if any could bring proof of the dragon's death or if undead to put him to rest and bring back something for burial.

PERSENET'S AUCTION HOUSE AND CARAVANSERAI

Faheleel's largest caravanserai has been swiftly converted into a makeshift auction house by its latest owner. Persenet is a minotaur from Corremel who has made the auction house the latest in a long list of business projects: most modest successes, some *spectacular* failures. A DC 15 History check reveals the "self-harvesting wheat enchantment," an incident of some renown and much speculation that she refuses to speak of.

The auction house, however, is uncontroversial and wildly successful, especially with so many of the caravans and adventurers staying at the caravanserai serving as a ready stream of moneyed buyers. She is eager to talk about an incredible statue brought in from the ruins of Iram recently, which sold for twenty-five *thousand* gold, and is eager to help further expeditions outfit themselves if they promise to auction some of their findings here.

Art pieces and other loot from Iram are almost ready for auction while minor magical items periodically find their way to the auction floor. With such valuable loot about, Persenet keeps a mage, three gladiators, and a dozen minotaurs on staff as guards.

THE OASIS

At Faheleel's center is the oasis. A large, shallow lake fed by several underground rivers and surrounded by tall reeds and date palms. It's the heart of the town: children play around it, locals rest and socialize in the shade of its trees, and an impromptu marketplace rises around it whenever a large caravan stops in town. The oasis itself is carefully maintained by the locals, and travelers must go to one of the town's wells to get water instead of drinking from it directly.

This also makes it far easier to charge foreigners to refill their water supplies as they pass through.

The largest permanent building near the oasis is the abode of Faheleel's headman, a gnoll mage named Sahure. Sahure is well aware of the oddity of his position being a male gnoll with social and political power and is eager to ensure that his position does not slip. He took power after the previous headwoman was exiled by the populace due to rampant cruelty and perceived favoritism toward rich travelers over the inhabitants of Faheleel. He is an intelligent and kind leader and is reasonably popular in the town. That said, he doesn't approve of the excavation of Iram as he believes it will bring something dangerous to Faheleel or anger the undead and djinn in the desert but does not view himself as having the legal or moral authority to stop adventurers. Especially with how much wealth it has brought into the town. This has brought him into conflict with Asra, though it's a conflict that has remained civil so far.

He lives with his partner, Aset, a **qutrub** who turned away from cannibalism and isolation to live in Faheleel. Aset serves as a guide to those in the area and regularly roams the desert to save lost or distressed travelers or negotiate with other qutrub to keep them away from the town and its population. Foreigners occasionally confuse him for a werewolf, which he's often slow to correct. He's not eager to speak of Iram but if approached and convinced can give the following information:

- At night, undead legionnaires rise and attack those they find. They are solely incorporeal undead, mostly **banshees**, **shadows**, and **wraiths**, as the legionnaires' bodies are trapped underground. If you get below ground, you're fair game at all times of day and may run into corporeal undead.
- The qutrub are flesh-eating djinn who consider Iram a hunting ground. Many leash the undead and use them to kill travelers who the qutrub then eat.

- He lived in Iram for some time before he met Sahure. Most of the city is underground and far more dangerous than the upper city.

The Upper City

Iram is approximately three days north of Faheleel. Ruined pillars and weathered marble plazas rise over the horizon, protruding unnaturally from the rock. The ruins rise one to two floors above the ground and are clearly the upper spires of something greater buried below. This ring of ruins is about a mile and a half in radius, which is rather large by the standards of Midgardian cities, and there are no visible ruins of city walls or defensive fortifications that would mark an official boundary, merely the slow realization that the ruins stretch out into the distance.

In the center of the ruin is a massive sinkhole that makes up the visible portion of the Pit. It is a quarter mile in radius and a hundred feet deep, and the sinkhole can be seen from above if one is standing at its edge.

The upper city is fairly safe during the day but has also been thoroughly looted over the millennia. However, at night, ruthless undead and hungry qutrub roam the towers for prey. **Banshees**, **qutrub**, **shadows**, and **wraiths** are common threats, often in great, ghostly swarms under the command of a qutrub. Other explorers and wild animals, including **bulettes**, rogue or weaponized **elementals**, and **giant scorpions** are also threats, though less common in the city than outside of it.

LOCATIONS AND PEOPLE IN THE UPPER CITY

There is not so much left to see in the upper city, but it serves as a staging ground.

QUDRA THE STORYTELLER

Qudra is a **qutrub** necromancer, always accompanied by her bound **wraiths**. She has cleared out an ancient tower as her lair and

fashioned it with salvaged finery. She travels the city and desert at night, accosting travelers on the road and demanding to hear stories of their travels. Those who impress her are blessed, and undead will not attack them unprovoked for a day and a night. Those who tell purposefully boring stories or refuse her are attacked and eaten.

Ruined Camps

The camps of less fortunate explorers are a common sight in the upper city. Some are corpse-strewn messes, where shadows and wraiths killed an expedition in the night. Others are eerily abandoned, well-organized affairs where an expedition headed into the undercity and never returned. A ruined camp may hold some sort of expedition journal, detailing one of the dangers of the City of Pillars or of the art and signs of life found in the undercity. Alternately, it may house a swarm of **shadows** that killed the previous occupants, eager to murder new prey that dare step into the shade.

Tunnel Entrances

Many towers in the city are entrances to the network of tunnels and subterranean caverns that make up the Pit. Excavating rubble will reveal sloping paths into the darkness or still intact stairways to descend. Monsters often live in these entrances, waiting out the burning heat of the day in relative safety. Even so, to a group without flight, they are the easiest way into the Pit.

The Pit

The Pit is divided into two parts: the sinkhole and the tunnels.

The Sinkhole is the most visible part of the Pit. It is an open-air stretch of ruins where the city's center crashed through the ground from the sheer force of its destruction. It is littered with enormous buildings, towers collapsed, roofs caved in, both weathered by millennia of exposure and protected from the elements by the sheer walls of the Pit. At its center is

a massive, ruined temple. It has no roof, and the petrified corpse of a massive tree stands at its center. Once, the tree must have emerged from the pit itself, but it has snapped near the base and toppled, crushing part of the temple's outer wall.

The tunnels are larger, stretching underneath the entirety of the upper city, but less accessible by far. They are a series of tunnels, caverns, and buried buildings, utterly devoid of light and incredibly difficult to navigate or map. Getting lost is easy and, due to the sheer hostility of the terrain, often lethal.

Both areas are infested with undead. **Banshees, ghaunts, ghouls, mummies, skeletons, wights,** and **wraiths** all infest the undercity, reliving the battle that killed them and viewing interlopers as hostile combatants. **Qutrub** are rarer here than in the upper city, but some yet exist, gathering and binding undead to their service or keeping vigil over the ruins.

Additionally, many **pillar guardians** have survived the fall of Iram. Some are inactive, only striking in self-defense. Others follow orders long-since rendered irrelevant, guarding ruined vaults, watching cribs rotted to dust, pulling rotted buckets from dried wells to fill shattered tubs. They are immediately and immensely hostile if their ancient orders are threatened. Worse, they are often tasked in pairs.

However, this danger also means that the wonders of the Pit are relatively intact. Art pieces, murals, preserved writings, and techno-magical constructs are all lucrative items to any party brave enough to retrieve them and strong enough to get out alive.

LOCATIONS AND PEOPLE IN THE PIT

There is still much to find in the Pit for those willing to risk it.

AZHAD'S WARREN

Azhad's warren is a network of large tunnels and caverns in the northern section of the

tunnels. It houses Azhad and Muttalib, two of Iram's victims who have become trapped in the Pit, as well as their hoard of treasure.

Azhad was a trueborn dragon attached to the legion killed by Meskhenit. He was swallowed by the sands, his wings torn from his body, but survived the ordeal by giving himself to Iram. He is trapped in the warrens, too large for tunnels and unable to dig, so he journeys through the paths he can reach in an endless search for freedom. He is accompanied by the djinn outcast Muttalib, who searches the tunnels for prey and guides Azhad to them that the two might eat.

Azhad is a **young adult red dragon** with no fly speed. Muttalib is a **qutrub** who has maximum health per hit dice (50). Both have been entirely subverted by Iram, so their types have been changed to aberration (Iram).

As neither can escape, Iram is using them as bait. They will attack those they encounter, and Iram will offer to help their victims. If anyone accepts, Azhad and Muttalib will become sloppy and allow either an escape or for themselves to be killed, though Iram prefers to preserve them for continued use. They have amassed a small hoard of wealth from their victims and store it in their lair. Its centerpiece is a *Clay Idol of Iram*.

THE GRAND TEMPLE

At the very center of the Pit is a temple. A monumental, open-topped building that once housed a nascent World Tree. The tree has toppled and fallen over the north wall of the temple, shattering it. Its outer wall is a grand thing of sheer marble walls, elegant domes, and exquisitely carved entryways. Statues to dozens of gods line its halls, each subtly marred with fungal growth, blackened veins, or hollowed eyes. At its center is a grand, open-roofed courtyard, benches arrayed in rows around the World Tree's corpse and a grand, circular altar ringing its stump.

Four *Clay Idols of Iram* are arranged about a dais, watched eternally by the unceasing vigil of the Stalwart King. The undead king's

sole purpose in undeath is to ensure that the idols remain here until Iram starves to death and they crumble. It is not aware of Azhad's possession of an idol or resultant Infestation. The corpses of would-be thieves are stacked like cordwood in a corner of the courtyard.

ROYAL LIBRARY

This grand, three-story building was once the glorious royal library, repository of all the knowledge and history and culture of the City of Pillars. Unfortunately, Iram had little need for a library or for records of its actions. It remembered those things, and records would be clues as to its existence and nature. As such, the library was left to gather dust once Iram possessed the city, its tomes moldering, its archives sealed, and its halls empty, inhabited only by those poor, still-free souls who needed a roof over their head for a night or to hide from the many eyes of Iram for a day.

It is currently haunted by the **ghost** of Ubar, a librarian who had been investigating Iram's slow takeover of the city when he was murdered. The ghost cannot leave the library but wishes to show people the cache of intelligence he managed to preserve before his death. As such, he will attempt to attract the attention of trespassers in the library, speaking to them in a long-dead dialect of Common and directing them to a loose floor tile under which is hidden a wax-sealed tube containing reams of information about Iram: of note are its name and that it targets the powerful and ambitious preferentially. Additionally, there is a journal of the investigation that ends with Ubar realizing that he is being followed and praying that others succeed where he has failed.

For those with no interest in the ghost, the library still has a wealth of immensely valuable tomes. Ancient magical secrets, accounts of events before recorded history, and much of the past of the City of Pillars and its many achievements can be found here if one can discern the intact tomes from the ruined and decipher their long-dead language.

Additionally, two *djinn vessels* are secreted away somewhere in the library's subterranean archives, hidden among active **pillar guardians** and hungry **oozes** that have made the place their home.

- One contains Nadir, a bloody-minded **efreet**, sealed away while Iram was in power for discovering Iram and insulting it at length. Unfortunately, while he knows much, he is also pointlessly belligerent and is unlikely to cooperate when freed. He knows nearly everything about Iram, save how the city was destroyed and how to save the infested.
- Bushra is a proud but gracious **marid**, sealed away as Iram came to power in the city. She was a friend of Ubar and was assisting him in his investigation.

One night, she came to warn Ubar of an attempt on his life, only to be imprisoned and sealed in the archives. She is haughty toward her rescuers but intersperses this with sincere thanks and well-wishes. She shares what she knows of the city if players ask, including what little she knows about Iram. (It is an infestation of some sort and can be violently burned out of its victims at some risk to the victim's health). If the party leave on good terms with her, the next time they are in mortal danger, three **water elementals** arrive to rescue them, declaring in Bushra's voice that they are even.

Monsters

There is much to fear in the City of Pillars.

PILLAR GUARDIAN

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 128 (17d8 + 51)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Int +1

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +6

Damage Immunities Poison

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



Senses darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 16
Language none
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The pillar guardian has advantage on all saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The pillar guardian makes three sword attacks or one sword attack and one lash attack.

Sword. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage

Lash. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 60 ft., two targets. **Hit:** 7 (2d6) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be grappled and pulled to a space of the pillar guardian's choice within 10 feet of it.

Shockwave (Recharge 6). Each creature in a 25-foot cube originating from the pillar guardian must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 21 (6d6) damage and be knocked prone.

Pillar guardians are ancient automatons created in the City of Pillars well before Iram's arrival. They were used as soldiers, guardians, babysitters, and ornamentation and were intelligent enough to accept and interpret orders from their masters. Unfortunately, the art faded with Iram's infestation of the city and died entirely when it was destroyed. Now, they simply follow their last given orders. Appearing to the world as wondrous, finely made statues until some offense causes them to murder those responsible.

Pillar guardians in the city appear to be finely made humanoid statues, painted exquisitely and decorated with gold, silver, and precious gems. Equivalents were once exported, most to cities now lost to time, and often looked far different. A reflection of the recipient or an eccentric artist's personal flair. In Per-Bastet, Meskhenit is reported to have a single pillar guardian fashioned in the image of an aasimar guarding her treasures.



QUTRUB

Medium elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +1, Con +4, Wis +2, Cha +1

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +1, Survival +2

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Terran

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Arcane Cannibal. If the qutrub spends a minute eating a corpse, it regains all uses of a single spell.

Innate Spellcasting. The qutrub's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit

with spell attacks), and they can innately cast the following spells:

2/Day each: *entangle*, *inflict wounds*,
jump

1/Day each: *pass without trace*,
shatter

ACTIONS

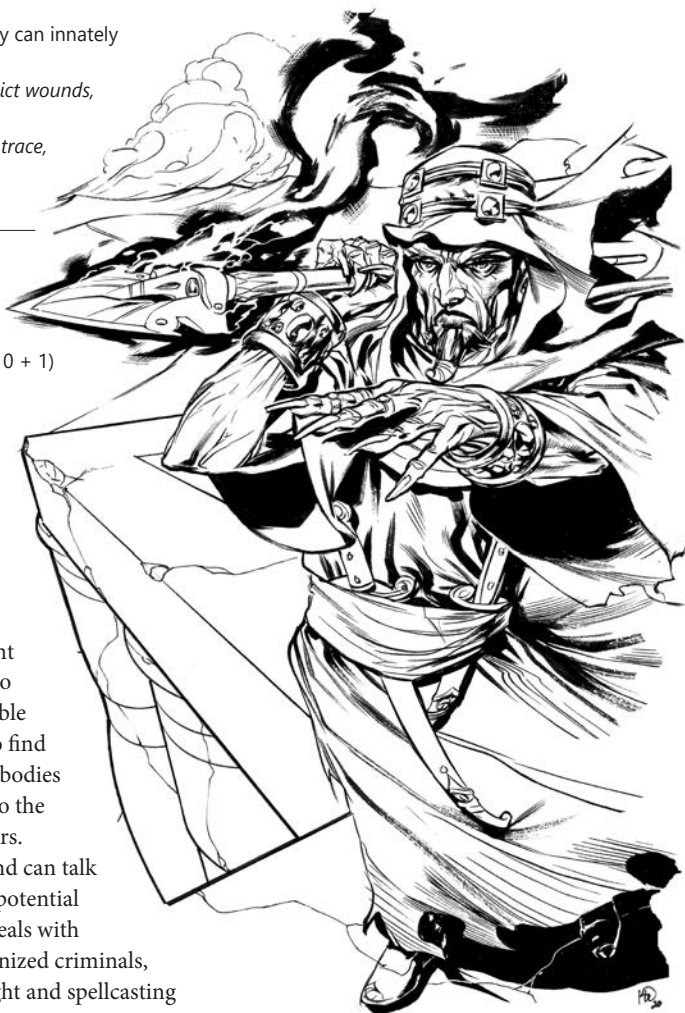
Multiattack. The qutrub makes two claw attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon

Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage.

Qutrub are scavenging, earthly genies the size of a human with thick fur and canine heads. They eat corpses and scavenge from the dead, drawing magical power from the flesh of intelligent creatures. Qutrub prefer to inhabit ruins in inhospitable wilderness, ranging out to find prey or simply taking the bodies of those who have fallen to the elements of other predators.

Qutrub are intelligent and can talk but dislike doing so with potential meals. They often make deals with bandits, tyrants, and organized criminals, trading their physical might and spellcasting for more regular access to corpses.



THE STALWART KING

Medium undead, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 171 (17d8 + 17)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +4, Wis +7

Skills Acrobatics +9, Insight +7, Perception +7

Damage Immunities Poison

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

Senses truesight 90 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages all

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

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

Iram's Bane. The Stalwart King has advantage on attack rolls against creatures and objects infested by Iram and advantage on saving throws against any effect originating from them.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Stalwart King may make one spear attack and two slam attacks.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage and 9 (2d8) thunder damage. Target must make DC 17 Strength saving throw or be moved 10 feet away from the Stalwart King and knocked prone.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Leashed Wrath. Choose 3 targets within 90 feet and in line of sight. Each must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, they take 13 (2d10 + 2) radiant damage.

Dread Beckoning (Recharge 6). All hostile creatures within 200 feet must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or take 36 (8d8) thunder damage and be pulled 50 feet toward the Stalwart King or until they are stopped by intervening terrain. On a success, they take half damage and are only pulled 5 feet. Creatures adjacent to the Stalwart King are not affected by this ability.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Stalwart King can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. He may only use one option at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Stalwart King regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Attack. The Stalwart King makes a slam attack.

Command (2 Actions). The Stalwart King casts the *command* spell (DC 16)

The last king of the City of Pillars did not survive his sacrifice. However, his body was reanimated by the holy energy that killed him, filled with singular, holy purpose. It gathered the clay idols that housed the remnants of Iram and secluded them within the city's temple, keeping an eternal vigil to ensure that Iram starves in the city's ruins.

If killed, a *speak with dead* spell allows the caster to speak with Aratesh, the last king of the City of Pillars. Aratesh knows all information described in the City of Pillars and Iram sections and is eager to warn others. Even he does not know which deity answered his call. He refuses any attempt at resurrection.

Magic Items

There are great wonders to be found in the forgotten City of Pillars.

CLAY IDOL OF IRAM

Wondrous item, artifact

These clay idols hold extensions of Iram's consciousness, allowing it to survive so long as even one exists and allowing it to speak to those infested within a mile of the idol at any given time. To uninfested, they are merely a magically powerful art object that looks beautiful to the beholder no matter who they are and what their standards of beauty are.

To those infested by Iram, touching the idol and spending a bonus action allows the user to see and hear through any object Iram has infested, even if it is on another plane of existence. Iram facilitates this and will help guide them toward events it thinks they should observe.

DJINN VESSEL

Wondrous item, rare

A rough predecessor to the *ring of djinni summoning* and the *ring elemental command*, this clay vessel is approximately a foot long and half as wide. An iron stopper engraved with a rune of binding seals its entrance. While empty, once per day, the vessel may be unstopped to cast the *banishment* spell (DC 15) upon a celestial, fiend, or elemental. If an elemental is banished in this way, it is stored in the vessel instead of banished to a demiplane or its native plane. At the end of the spell's duration, it is trapped in the vessel where it is aware of the outside world and of all other *djinn vessels* but can take no actions. An elemental trapped in this way may be released by removing the vessel's stopper.

A released elemental is under no magical compulsions regarding its behavior.

OLD GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

by Ben McFarland with Robert Fairbanks

Always located in a secluded clearing, often in the Margreve but occasionally in the stark pine forests of Vidim or Domovogrod or the melancholic Rothenian Plains, the home of Baba Yaga exudes the oppressive stillness of a graveyard, the air heavy with the stale scent of ancient death. The sounds of nature remain eerily absent: no natural wild creature willingly remains within five miles, and the sky overhead appears overcast, growing stormier depending on Old Grandmother's mood. Thin grass barely covers the ground, which seems to slouch away from the hut, a structure without doors or windows. Sometimes, whether or not Baba Yaga is away on errands or at home, a vila sweeps the walkway or one of her knights brushes their mount in the shade.

Surrounding the hut stands a wrought-iron fence. Ninety-nine skulls of various races adorn its spikes, one spike always left empty for the next petitioner to earn Baba Yaga's wrath. On either side of the gate, tied to the fence and stretching to the spire of the hut's conical roof, two twisted lines of captured red hats of Niemheim gnomes windlessly flutter like prayer flags. If one stands silently at the gate's threshold, the faint, soulful cries of their captured previous owners become audible, drifting through the Margreve.

Observant visitors may notice the skulls bear tool marks, indicating someone scraped

the meat from the bone, and at night, their sockets flicker, each filled with a tiny mote of firelight from Grandmother's fireplace. The skulls infrequently bicker, mutter warnings, or throw insults; each still remembers its former life.

The Cottage Court and Tea with Grandmother

Delighting in both intrigue and mockery, Baba Yaga permits certain lesser gods, powers, and nations to keep diplomats in her home. These intelligent beasts speak like mortals but serve as representatives of their various masters, knowing they only continue to live as long as Old Grandmother wills it. Should they lose her favor, any of them could fill her stew pot and be replaced before the moon repeated its phase. They linger in her yard, foyer, and in a few rooms the Arch Crone has specifically permitted. She calls this group the "Cottage Court" in a gesture of derision toward the many faerie courts.

They include Koschei's goat, the only creature Baba Yaga holds sacred and may even love. The hourglass-pupiled goat holds the duck, which contains the rabbit, which holds the egg containing Koschei's soul and allows Baba Yaga to access it whenever she desires in order to speak to the undying king, heal him, or gift him a sliver of her

power. Other emissaries include Drift, the snow fox of Boreas with a silver tongue and a debonair manner—he is the longest-visiting emissary; Hedge, the fat, gluttonous, yellow toad that spitefully serves Mammon; S’paw, the black feline representative of Ulthar with

a kinked tail, golden eyes, and a razor-sharp tongue; Telja, the raven of Wotan who mostly watches and rarely speaks unless spoken to; Arcadrine, the enormous barn owl ambassador of the Moonlit Court of the shadow fey, is often draped in cobwebs and



On the Fence: Baba Yaga’s Skulls (Roll d20)

Across centuries, Grandmother claimed the skulls of innumerable beings who frustrated, insulted, irritated, or wronged her. The fence is enchanted to appear when the hut stops

walking and disappears someplace unknown when it begins traveling again; the skulls along its spikes magically vary from her collection. This is a sampling the characters may encounter:

-
- 1 Rosencheeks, a Niemheim gnome glassblower who thought she could buy her family’s pardon and mistook the price.

 - 2 Barkstripper, a Niemheim gnome who refused to reveal their past and leads visitors astray.

 - 3 Bencopper, a middle-aged gnome and former Zharadnik of Niemheim, hid his cap before being captured.

 - 4 Rowan, a Dornish elf wizard, sought after secrets of Thorn and knew too much.

 - 5 Thorsil, a Northlander dwarf who failed to steal Boreas’s ambassador to Grandmother.

 - 6 Gurthanix, a demon being punished. It mocks and insults anyone expecting to deal with Grandmother.

 - 7 Tolga, a Mharoti dragonborn ambassador who brought a message to Baba Yaga but committed a faux pas.

 - 8 Eir, a Northlander dwarf who wanted to learn the fate of a sibling but broke Baba Yaga’s bargain.

 - 9 Sandor, an Ironcrag dwarf of Grisol Canton, was trying to steal from her treasury but was caught.

 - 10 Veska, a Trollheim trollkin sought information about Fenris but crossed Baba Yaga.

 - 11 Gyorgji, a Krakovan trollkin who killed one of Baba Yaga’s favorite vila.

 - 12 Raggedskein, a shadow fey who was caught trying to steal a rival’s skull off the fence. He’s always on the opposite side of the hut from the rival now.

 - 13 Drago, formerly a dhampir from the Blood Kingdom who offered to catch a gnome for Grandmother but gave the gnome to their lord in an attempt to gain leverage with Baba Yaga.

 - 14 Socha, a merchant from Vidim who tried to cheat Baba Yaga after meeting her on the road.

 - 15 Fang, a darakhul who tried to eat Koschei’s goat and was caught by the Knight of Dusk.

 - 16 Luciano, a satyr who broke a vila’s heart and tried to seduce her sister.

 - 17 Durril, a Kariv human who double-crossed the Knight of Day and sold his horse to centaurs.

 - 18 Miklos, a Blood Kingdom peasant who failed in a task and cannot be freed until it is completed.

 - 19 Druuj, a ravenfolk bard who has plans to be rescued and resurrected but wants to first spend a decade on the fence.

 - 20 Aleks, a Dornig elfmarked wizard who attempted to bind Grandmother.
-

hates Telja; and the Grime, a hive-minded swarm of roaches bound to Akyishigal, the demon lord of filth and corruption, and which Baba Yaga whimsically snacks upon, snatching up an insect to carefully savor whenever the mood strikes. These creatures snipe and bicker, attempting to get a court rival consumed by Old Grandmother in a moment of provoked fury.

Baba Yaga entertains other visitors as well. On the new moon, when Selles offers her dark face, Grandmother hosts one or more potent individuals for a cup of tea and conversation; she particularly loves a brew made from petals of a blue rose. These peaceful encounters present opportunities for the parties involved to trade or barter for tidbits of information or favors only the immensely powerful might provide. Often intimate affairs of a single

guest and always present in their true form, past callers include the Master of Demon Mountain, sometimes called Roggero Lucar Ordontrona; Mwato Yaav, the Sorcerer Queen of Lignas's Viper Throne; Enkada Pishtuhk, Treachery's Rider; Mharot the Founder; Reborn Queen-Goddess Meskhenit, Mother of Destiny and Shield of Per-Bastet; the lich Nulu Nagoa, the Eternal Lord of Kush; the Norns of the Well of Urd; the Saffron Rajah, Vaghamesh Drustani Arenja; spirits of Babas from other branches of the World Tree, though what Baba Yaga might learn from tea with herself from another reality is unclear; before her coma, the Imperatrix of the Arbonesse visited at least three times; since her acquisition of a Divine Spark, Yeneva Podella, the Oracle of Kammae Straboli and First Servant of Hecate, has visited twice; and



BABA YAGA'S HUT: LAIR ACTIONS

Old Grandmother's residence effectively serves as a lair for her knights, including Koschei, and vila and other fey. An encounter with one of these creatures where it evokes the following powers might be a way to find the otherwise elusive site. Although they rarely linger, when encountering a creature allied with Baba Yaga within 100 feet of the hut, they can invoke the inherent magic to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), they may cause one of the following effects:

- The fiery cinders within the fence's skulls swirl and impact against one target per 3 HD of the activating creature. Each targeted creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) fire and force damage and being knocked prone on a failure or half as much and not knocked prone on a successful one.
- The cries of the souls captured within the Niemheim gnome caps rend and tear at the psyche. Any creature ending their turn within 30 feet of the entrance gate to Baba Yaga's

hut must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) psychic damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. This effect lasts until both of the other two available lair actions are used or the invoking creature dies.

- The invoking creature may exit into the underbrush at the edge of the clearing and reenter at any other point along the edge of the circular clearing as part of a move action. This travel doesn't provoke opportunity attacks. This effect persists until initiative count 20 on the following round.

Story Seed: *Alas, I Knew Him*. The characters must find a specific skull and get it to answer particular questions. The skull refuses until a task is completed from its mortal life, but it swears to answer truthfully. It also swears Baba Yaga's hut will sit in this same place when the characters return with proof of their success. Is knowing the hut's verifiable location worth more than the skull's information, especially to someone like the deposed Queen of Krakova?



in a feat not quite understood, an individual claiming to be the Black Sorceress arrived once and left after three hours. The Animal Lords of Khandiria appear to hold some enmity toward Baba Yaga and have not visited, but at least one Cathayan ambassador has shared tea before the previous Interregnum.

Outside and In

From outside, Baba Yaga's home appears as a small, circular log home, just twenty feet in diameter and built with wooden pegs, sporting a conical, slate-shingle roof and a cemented, river-stone chimney, which always appears to rise from the opposite side of the roof from the viewer. Seventeen feet tall at the wrought iron spire extending from the roof's peak, a thick, deep-grey plaster seals its external walls, but it is cracked and missing in places. The hut doesn't have any windows, and initially, anyone approaching it cannot find the door. Even when circling the hut from more than one direction at the same time, the door remains hidden. It is impossible to enter the hut without first saying the phrase: "Hut, turn your back to the forest and your front facing me."

This causes the hut to stand, turn, and settle back down, like a bird in its nest, revealing the entrance to the speaker. Baba Yaga uses a different phrase, but hers seems to change frequently. The door is crafted from heavy, dark cedar, wrapped with iron bindings, and

fitted with a heavy polished brass knocker. Both the door and the gate to the yard swing open untouched.

Though a device, the hut most certainly demonstrates personality. Sometimes it shivers or squawks as a cleric enters. It is vain and stubborn, a little proud and mischievous. It is an inveterate liar, never turning down an opportunity to deceive—though it never, ever lies about its name or status as Baba Yaga's hut. Few claim it is possible to earn the hut's favor by complimenting its construction or endurance while traveling. Not generally an aggressive combatant, it strikes back hard when attacked (AC 17, legs are 200 hp each; attacks with the same attack bonus and double the damage as attacker).

The hut contains an impossibly huge space inside, with kitchens stocked with cooking supplies, storerooms loaded with dry goods and gear, dungeons for those Baba Yaga wishes to linger over questioning, laboratories for her magical experiments, guest rooms for her rare guests, strange oddities kept on display in passageways and parlors, dining rooms, smithies with white-hot forges, vaults loaded with gold and silver coins from a hundred forgotten kingdoms, and even stables kept stocked with rich oats and fine riding tack. The hut boasts no fewer than forty rooms, and its layout shifts with Grandmother's whims. Opening certain doors with a magic keyring the Fell Crone possesses

STORY SEED: GIT'YER GOAT GONE

The undying knight Koschei desires his freedom from Baba Yaga's service and knows he must first acquire the egg containing his soul. He offers a deal: he will complete a task if the characters are willing to engineer the goat's escape from the hut and the yard and three tasks if they will frame Mammon's toad emissary, Hedge, for the theft. Properly

executed, such a task could ensure the service of one of the greatest forces of destruction on Midgard while turning Old Grandmother against the Infernal Duke of Greed. They simply have to ensure no other emissary discovers their involvement or somehow benefits from the deed. Can they surreptitiously turn the Cottage Court against one another?



allows one to cross through specially prepared thresholds in distant lands thanks to a long-forgotten agreement with the Doorlord, Hune. A long hallway of unique doors allows her to visit each of her daughters' walking huts; Grandmother's hut is the largest, and some believe the lesser huts to be spawned from it, hatched from opal-like eggs hidden in the house. Baba Yaga keeps a treasure trove of magical herbs and teas; a very special door opens into a freestanding threshold at the Witch's Garden in a secret valley, hidden on the Rothenian Plain, where she tends to and collects rare herbs and plants for her potions. A beautifully crafted marble fountain bubbles in another remote corner of the hut, flowing with the "waters of life." Those who drink from the fountain confirm its healing and rejuvenating effects but also note Baba Yaga seems able to wordlessly communicate with them afterward, even over great distances.

Her favorite room, and the one where most people first meet Baba Yaga, remains her primary kitchen—of the five known—with its large, slate hearth and oven. The smoldering embers within warm or dry anything, and after stoking them with a few silver birch logs, Grandmother can cook anything into an edible meal. Baba Yaga sleeps on the hearth at night and is so attuned to the scents of the kitchen that she can identify a visitor's nationality with just a sniff, separating Vidim from Kariv from Ishadian without a glance. When housework or cooking chores need to be done, she summons three pairs of floating hands to tidy up or prepare the food. These hands roam the whole structure, mischievously investigating any guests.

There are no less than four sets of stables within the hut, each housing a score of magnificent steeds that she breeds and provides to the knightly avatars of Dawn, Noon, and Night; replacing those lost to combat or simply consumed by the power of her magics. She takes great pride in these beasts. Baba Yaga is immensely curious about

any centaurs who approach her and a bit more willing to tolerate misbehavior from them on the chance she might discover excellent stock to incorporate into her herds. Some whisper she is either the source or has the cure to the black strangles—or both—and simply waits for a petitioner to bargain for the cure.

In the deepest, most isolated room, a sleeping dragon guards three doors. Legends say they lead to the Realm of Dreams, the Land of the Dead, and to the location of the traveler's greatest desire, respectively. However, the doors shift and move, and the dragon often wakes hungry. If placated, the wyrm knows how to spot specific doors and can aid parties trying to locate a specific portal in this chamber or another elsewhere in the hut.

As a pocket dimension created by Baba Yaga, she has established the laws governing magic within her hut. No spells may affect her unless the caster possesses a small, baked biscuit that easily crumbles. She keeps a small collection of these in a psoglav-shaped jar, hidden in two of the five kitchens, only rarely gifting them. The hut steals any other spells cast for the Fell Crone's later use, their magic claimed like a *ring of spell storing*, but with no limit on the level of effect captured. She also continually benefits from a *stoneskin* effect while inside.

The hut moves supernaturally fast, traversing planes at angles to reality, utilizing shadow roads and Red Portals to cover great distances. Tales speak of travelers seeing it walking ley lines or paused for some reason in the netherspace between worlds; only the foolhardy interrupt Grandmother hurrying to some destination, but it is possible to engage her there. Her presence there often means Baba Yaga is also traveling through time; those causeway petitioners who survive report she sometimes forgets people or knows of events that have not yet passed, depending on whether she comes from the relative past or future. When traveling mundanely, the hut strolls with a base speed of 50 feet and crosses



deep rivers and lakes effortlessly, keeping the house dry. It is capable of massive leaps, easily covering a mile or more, paying no attention to rough terrain, freezing snow and ice, or bogs and mires.

STORY SEEDS

Need to bring Baba Yaga into your game? Try these:

- Baba Yaga transformed an individual the characters need to question into a hedgehog statuette. Unable to be restored or interrogated until someone washes the statue with water brought from within her hut, the characters need a cup of this water. But Baba Yaga gives nothing away and stealing anything directly from Old Grandmother draws her wrath, even a cup of water—especially if she discovered its purpose. How will the group acquire this simple bit of liquid and smuggle it back to free the sage? Or will they perform a task for her, asking for it as their price?
- Besides teleportation, almost nothing travels as fast, as reliably, or as stealthily as Old Grandmother's hut. If the characters could learn where the hut is and where it will go next, possibly through a diviner or other source of prognostication, they might be able to enter the hut and have a sufficiently distracting conversation with the great witch to infiltrate another region at a potentially small cost. The trick lies in being able to verbally occupy the Fell Crone long enough to complete the trip without entering into some lopsided bargain or being tricked into service.

Magic Items

Folktales associate numerous items with Baba Yaga, magical devices and weapons that she has gifted or enjoys or has sought to recover. The following list is a sample of such baubles.

BLUE ROSE

Wondrous item, rare

When the petals of this cerulean flower are prepared into a compote and consumed, you suffer 1 point of Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom damage and gain abilities you may use three times until your next long rest when the benefits fade. The damage remains until you receive a *lesser restoration* or take another long rest. If you are a spellcaster, you may use the following abilities:

- Increase the DC of an abjuration spell you cast by 2.
- Cast a spell as if you used a spell slot one level higher than actually used.
- Cast the spell as if you had applied one of the following metamagic benefits to it, whether or not you know the particular metamagic: heightened, quickened, or subtle.

You may use one to three uses of the *blue rose* as part of the action of casting a spell.

If you are not a spellcaster, you may use a reaction to use the following abilities:

- Gain advantage on a saving throw against an abjuration effect.
- Increase the DC of the ability check made as part of a *dispel magic* effect by 2.

Upon consuming the *blue rose* you must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become addicted.

It takes 1d4 days for *blue rose* addiction's symptoms to manifest in a creature. Symptoms include fatigue and nausea. You suffer one level of exhaustion and regain only half the normal number of hit points from spending Hit Dice and no hit points from finishing a long rest.

At the end of each long rest, an addicted creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, you lose 25% of your available Hit Dice for use during a short rest; this becomes your maximum available hit dice for use during a short rest until you break the addiction or receive a *greater restoration*. If you have no remaining hit dice to lose, you gain another exhaustion level, and your hit dice are returned to 75% of your maximum hit dice available when not addicted. This process continues until the exhaustion levels are removed or you receive a *greater restoration*. On a successful save, your exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces your level of exhaustion below one, you recover from the addiction. Taking *blue rose again* means you do not need to check for the effects of addiction for 1d4 days

BLUE ROSE TEA

Wondrous item, uncommon

A special preparation of *blue rose*, this tea allows you to cast the *divination* spell. However, you may ask a single question concerning a specific goal, event, or activity to occur within 14 days. You can render a dose of *blue rose* into three doses of *blue rose tea* with a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. A failed check indicates only one dose is made, and a check result of greater than 20 indicates an additional fourth dose is made.

PANOPLY OF DAWN, DAY, AND DUSK

Wondrous items, rare; require attunement

These are items crafted as tokens of service or reward to faithful henchmen, loyal allies, or the occasional mortal committing noteworthy deeds on behalf of Grandmother's marshals: the three horsemen, the "sons" of Baba Yaga. While the potency of these enchanted items grows as they are brought together so too does the danger. There is a 5% chance per item per week of attracting the attention of one of Baba Yaga's horsemen while within 150-miles

of the Margreve Forest and a 2% chance of it alerting Grandmother herself. Attuning to one piece of the set does not count toward your limit of attuned items if you have another part of the panoply attuned; only the first item counts toward attunement.

Dawnbringer's Coif

Wondrous item (helm), rare; requires attunement

While you wear, and are attuned to, this magical cloth-and-leather hood, you gain +1 bonus to AC and are immune to magical sleep. When combined and attuned as one-third of the *Panoply of Dawn, Day, and Dusk*, the *dawnbringer's coif* grants you advantage on perception rolls involving sight and immunity to the blinded and stunned conditions. Additionally, for 1 hour each day (which starts at daybreak), you have advantage on initiative and cannot be surprised.

Daysinger's Shield

Armor (shield), rare; requires attunement

This rustic, wood-and-leather cavalry buckler sports an enchanted brass shield boss polished to a dazzling, golden gleam. When equipped, critical hits against you have a 20% chance to cause the shield to flash and ring out, reflecting back half of any (GM's discretion) damage and blinding or deafening (50/50%) the target for 1 round (DC 13 Wisdom save to avoid). When combined and attuned as one-third of the *Panoply*, the *daysinger's shield* also grants you resistance to fire, a +1 bonus to AC, and for 1 hour each day (which starts at midday), you gain *regeneration* (3 hp/round) while outdoors and above ground.

Nightwalker's Boots

Wondrous item (boots), rare; requires attunement

These magical, knee-high moccasins are of dark wolfskin and soft doe hide. While wearing and attuned to *nightwalker's boots*, you gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) rolls made to remain hidden or

move silently and on Wisdom (Survival) checks made after dark. When combined and attuned as one-third of the *Panoply*, the boots also grant a climb speed of 15 feet and advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) and Strength (Athletics) skill checks. Additionally, for 1 hour each day (which starts at nightfall), *nightwalker's boots* increase your speed by 30 feet.

PELEGORN GOODBELLY'S LOST LADLE

Wondrous item, unique; requires attunement

Little is known of the cause of Chef Goodbelly's fate other than he once dared serve up Grandmother's morning borscht with something other than her preferred borscht ladle, which he admitted to misplacing. From that moment, Goodbelly himself was "misplaced," and was not seen since, though occasionally heard, his soul being bound to the ladle. An intricately, if disturbingly, carved serving ladle, it is fashioned from ancient, yellowed ivory or bone. Its spoon-like cup is stained a deep, dark burgundy (almost as dark as the soul now residing within). Once per long rest, drinking water from the ladle provides the benefits of a *lesser restoration*. Chef Goodbelly can be consulted, providing you advantage on three Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) checks. After three checks, Goodbelly wants to be freed, and if you do not work toward his release, there is a 50% chance he will impose disadvantage on any Dexterity (Stealth) or Charisma (Deception) checks as he verbally sabotages you. Freeing the chef is a task left to the GM's discretion, but Baba Yaga will not take kindly to someone undoing her handiwork.

PERIAPT OF ELDRITCH KNOWLEDGE

Wondrous item, uncommon; requires attunement

This pendant consists of a hollow metal cylinder on a fine, silver chain and is capable of holding a spell scroll within. When you put a scroll in the periapt, it is added to your

prepared spell list, but you must still use any spell slots necessary to cast it. You may apply any metamagic you know to it as normal. If the spell is not usually on your class's spell list, it cannot be higher than half the level of the highest-level spell you can cast, minimum level 1. If the spell has an option for casting at a higher level, you may do so normally.

SOULBOUND NIEMHEIM CAP

Wondrous item, uncommon

While wearing this red, woolen cap, you are hidden from Baba Yaga's divination magic. You can't be targeted by her magic or perceived by *scrying* sensors. However, she can see or hear you normally. You have advantage on Charisma (Deception) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks when dealing with devils and gain +2 on those checks with other creatures. Due to the soul of a dead gnome bound to the hat, divination magic always shows a Niemheim gnome wearing it and located at Baba Yaga's hut.

STONE PESTLEMACE

Weapon (mace), rare

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this mace, fashioned from a single piece of carefully carved blue stone and quarried from hidden locations within the

Margreve Forest. When you hit a target with this magic weapon, you deal an additional 2d4 necrotic damage, and any damage caused by you doesn't bleed and therefore does not draw the ire of the Margreve Forest when fighting its agents; you do not suffer a penalty to Status if you kill an agent of the forest. You also do not shed blood if injured, preventing the forest from learning more about you or sensing your location; you have a +10 bonus to Status with regard to the Margreve Forest, but this bonus cannot raise your Status to greater than "Guest of the Margreve." You have advantage on saving throws against effects generated by the forest which might affect you. The *stone pestlemace* grinds away at undead creatures, inflicting an additional 2d6 hit points of damage per attack while ignoring any immunities or resistance to necrotic damage the target may possess. Particularly favored by vila, the fey daughters of Baba Yaga are known to wield them.

A vila using a *stone pestlemace* replaces its multiattack and shortsword attacks with the following:

Multiattack. A vila makes two stone pestlemace attacks or two shortbow attacks.

Stone Pestlemace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage and 5 (2d4) necrotic damage.



STORY SEED: THE COST OF FREEDOM

A *soulbound Niemheim cap* is brought back home, and the initial horror of an item containing the bound soul of a fellow gnome gives way to desperate optimism. The magical process used to create the caps, if deciphered and replicated, could liberate the Niemheim gnomes from Baba Yaga. However, this freedom means killing half their population

and trapping their souls in the resulting caps. Is it worth so much death to hide a whole people from Grandmother? And even if it works, success means every gnome born in the future will require the death of a living gnome to ensure the continued safety of the survivors. Will the characters surrender the cap, flee, or destroy it before the king's court wizards can seize it?

Spells

Some spellcasters have managed to glean secrets from their interactions with Baba Yaga.

BURST OCCULUS

4th-level necromancy (sorcerer, warlock, wizard)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: instantaneous

With a claw-like plucking gesture, you cause a terrible wound to the targeted creature's eye. With a failed Charisma save, the target takes 4d10 necrotic damage and suffers disadvantage on ranged attacks and Wisdom (Perception) checks involving sight until the target takes a long rest or benefits from a *lesser restoration*. Success indicates the target takes half damage and suffers no impairment. Targets with only two eyes who suffer this spell twice without removing the impairment gain the blinded condition until they take a long rest or benefit from a *lesser restoration* spell.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d10 for each slot level above 4th. If you use a spell slot of 7th level or higher, you may affect both eyes in a single casting by sacrificing 2d10 damage from the total number of damage dice.

GREATER UNSEEN SERVANT

2nd-level conjuration (ritual) (bard, cleric, sorcerer, warlock, wizard)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: 10 minutes, concentration

You create three sets of disembodied hands that obey your commands. Each set of hands can carry 7 lb. separately or 30 lb. together, working either collectively or individually on up to three tasks for the spell duration.

Or you may choose to cast the spell with the hands affixed to a wall: three sets of hands can

give a climbing speed of 20 feet to any ally using them along a single wall. If five or more sets of hands are used, they can be used to cross open pits or chasms up to 20 feet + 10 feet per additional two pairs.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the number of pairs of hands increases by one per level, and the maximum total weight the hands may carry as a group is increased by 10 lb.

SOULBOUND SERVANT

3rd-level necromancy (bard, cleric, sorcerer, warlock, wizard)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 day

Less effective than the magics that make *soulbound Niemheim caps*, you temporarily bind a spirit to an object, causing it to animate the object and complete tasks for you.

Only one animated object or corpse may be controlled by the caster at a time. When the servant has completed three tasks, the object falls apart and is no longer functional—the spirit is released. In order to create a new animated object while one is already functional, you must physically destroy the existing object. If directed to attack, it uses the statistics for a zombie, skeleton, or animated object, as appropriate. Fighting for up to 5 rounds counts as a task.

The animated object speaks with the voice of a deceased loved one; anyone hearing it hears a different voice, even though the message is the same. While the object fulfills the command, the object suffers minor cosmetic disintegration, losing bits and pieces but remaining functional. It also emits some sensory element that renders its nature apparent to the observant: an animated cat might leave pawprints which smolder for a second or two as it walks, a lantern might emit a scent of brimstone while it operates.

The spirit is required to accurately, correctly, and promptly complete the tasks ordered by you and to respond truthfully to your questions.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the duration is extended for 1 day and one task per level of the spell slot used.

Baba Yaga's Drake

While countless vila, psoglav, strigoi, ala, and the three knights serve Old Grandmother, she has another creature at her beck and call—the bolla. Cunning and vicious, it hides in fens and lairs on cloud-shrouded hilltops, hunting travelers and awaiting its mistress's call.

BOLLA (MIST DRAKE)

Gliding through the air like an enormous eel through water, a long, serpentine form slowly materializes from the swiftly gathering fog.

Rushing River. Semi-translucent and cloudlike, the snakelike bolla seems formed of little more than water, mist, and magic. "Swimming" toward foes, it hisses quietly, maneuvering to strike while the mists and vapors swirl and coalesce, binding and bending themselves to the creature's bloodthirsty will.

Storied Pedigree. Legend states the bolla (or mist drake) is a hatchling, maturing into adolescence as the more fearsome errshaja (or wind drake), and eventually molting into adulthood as the dreaded, city-shattering kulshedra (or storm dragon).

BOLLA

Medium dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 123 (13d8 + 65)

Speed fly (hover) 45 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
9 (-1)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +8, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +3, History (Margrave) +3, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +6

Damage Resistances lightning

Damage Immunities cold

Condition Immunities prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Draconic, Sylvan

Challenge 7 (2,900)

Amphibious. The drake can breathe air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The drake's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell-save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The drake can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *clairvoyance*, *fog cloud*, *misty step*, *snowblind stare**, *wresting wind**

3/Day each: *blindness*, *dispel magic*, *freezing fog**

1/Day: *control water*, *control weather* (500-ft. radius), *drown**

(*see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The drake makes three bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) lightning damage.

Misty Manipulations. The drake can psychically control any fog, murk, or mist within 1 mile of its location, manipulating its density and movements at will.

Fangs in Fog. Any creature caught within the confines of the drake's *fog cloud* or *freezing fog* spells is subject to this ability. As its reaction, the drake can use an additional bite attack made with advantage against one target within the area of effect, regardless of the targets range, elevation, or positioning.

Frostbite Breath (Recharge 5–6). The drake exhales freezing mist and sleet in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 31 (7d8) cold damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. On a failed save, a target's speed is also halved.

THE DARKEST VAULTS OF THE GREAT MAZE

by Richard Pett

A maze within a maze within a maze... Every minotaur whispers its name, senses its presence, wonders at its complexity, its enigma, its beauty—the First Labyrinth.

To them, the Plane of the Great Labyrinth is just one facet of all mazes, and all mazes are one. Their darkest secrets, their greatest treasures, their deadliest dangers, all may be found beyond the next turn or through the next portal.

The First Labyrinth—maze of the world, cradle of convolution, and insanity of endless complexity—is one of the great mazes of the world. Or maybe it's one aspect of all mazes given form in Midgard. For now, the First Labyrinth may be the most unstill of all mazes. Through the Plane of the Great Labyrinth, the Great Maze touches every maze in existence, senses kinship and reaches out: touches, sometimes binds, absorbs, embraces, often fleeting, occasionally forever.

The First Labyrinth is in the Southlands city of Roshgazi but exists everywhere. The city decays on the shores of the Middle Sea, her towers torn by dragons 300 years ago, her soul fractured like that of her guardian and ward, the enigmatic and shattered Heart of the First Labyrinth. The Heart reaches into the dreams of minotaurs, haunts them, teases them, guides them, yet it is insane. One face of the Heart is called the Poet: wise and benevolent, it seeks to bring aid to repair its fractured

home. The dark face is called Broken, which still believes the war with dragons goes on in the city streets above and reaches out, claws outward to draw aid into the First Labyrinth for the battle that rages only inside its mind. And to its fractured mind, that aid can take so many different forms.

The madness is spreading. Yearning for aid, it stumbles blindly around every corner of every maze searching.

Mazuli Sul (the Heart's name in the native tongue of minotaurs) thus gropes outward, ever searching for help, opening portals into mazes that should be left undisturbed and unknown. Mazes grow into mazes, ways become confused, complex, unpredictable. The greatest maze-conjuring minotaur priests have an inkling of the dangers this holds—accidents in their own summonings have taught them that no maze is ever truly tamed—and they whisper tales of dread but also tales of vaults groaning with secrets, magic, and treasure. These vaults may be encountered around any turn in the most mundane dungeon or simplest maze. There is therefore an endless vigil, watching alert for what the Heart has drawn to its bosom to aid the minotaurs and thus potentially reap their destruction through desperation. They call these vaults the Dark Vaults of the Great Maze.

The Plane of the Great Labyrinth is endless and so is the potential for these dark corners.



A few are listed below, but in truth, when maze links maze, there is no knowing what may lurk beyond the next turn...

Belphegor's Penance

Do archdevils dream?

In their endless plotting and hate, do thoughts come unbidden to them? Paranoid, powerful, hungry, what crooked wants lurks behind those demented minds? Is there any doubt? Is there any fear?

Belphegor once had a dream—or more correctly a nightmare.

In his nightmare, Belphegor (see *Creature Codex*)

was stripped of his beloved Prime, his steed

and citadel and love, and cast back to the terrible pit from which he crawled an eternity ago. In that pit, his fears were laid bare:

his terror, his desires, his misery. And that suffering was given flesh, a wretched, pitiful wan thing that sobbed as it dragged its flaccid wings behind its emaciated form.

But when Belphegor awoke, the nightmare did not go. The given flesh and form and pain lay humble and broken before him. So quite naturally, the archdevil tore it to pieces and

wondered in its dark heart who had caused it. They would suffer as only an enemy of an archdevil can.

Alas, it returned to his dreams and grew flesh anew, and each time the archdevil tore the thing apart, it came back stronger, slowly taking pieces of the archdevil with it—memories, desires, hungers. Strength. His twin, his alter ego, grew, and Belphegor knew he would never be free of it.

Belphegor spoke to his beloved Prime, anger of toil—the thing of bones and metal and hate—and Prime whispered a plan. *Build again*, it impeached. *Build a prison about your shadow that it can never escape from and where nothing can ever find it to use against you.*

It called the prison Belphegor's Penance.

The Penance is alive, alive with wickedness in its cat's cradle of gears and gates and traps and structures, a maze with a dark secret. Shambling constructs roam its endless levels: crooked gorgons with too many heads, pale golems made of the flesh of things that have never cast a shadow. In mockery of his own crooked shadow, his unwanted twin, Belphegor flensed his skin and gave it life, gave it hunger and lidless eyes that never tire of their watch. And there within, in a tower within a maze within a citadel, lurks the true Penance of Belphegor, his alter ego, his intimate, his shame, a thing that calls itself the Shadow of Belphegor—a wretched sickly thing that embroils all the terrors and paranoia of an archdevil. And in its terror, it wears the skin to keep it safe, crooked limbs to fend off foes and bloated eyes that forever seek escape from its vile guardians.

And one night, the dream of Belphegor entered the dream of Broken.

Broken sensed the awful power at the other end of that vision, a twisted kinship in the constructed maze with a dark brooding purpose and anger. And one day, Broken reached out, and the First Labyrinth touched the Penance...

Now fronds of its demented limbs caress the First Labyrinth, grope in the darkness, the great mazes somehow sensing kin, wanting to embrace. For now, such couplings have been rare—a scent upon the air of maze walkers of oil and flesh and torment, confinement beyond counting in mortal time. Screams made with mouths that have never seen the sun. Tales from demented things that lurk in the deepest parts of the Plane of the Great

Labyrinth tell of something out there in the dark that is a prison, but for what?

And alas, for Belphegor also senses this and fears a joining, fears that his Penance will be breached, violated. And that cannot happen. He sends his own crooked creations into the aspects of the Great Labyrinth to seek, to cut these ties, to break these limbs, and to destroy the thing that seeks to embrace his misery—Broken itself.

The Bastion: The Great Folly or Cathedral of Iasona

There is a poem called the *Epic of Iasona* that is sung by minotaurs on their darkest festivals and mid-winter nights. The tale of a cold, immortal priestess of Hecate who has spent her years constructing a maze of such astonishing beauty and terror that minotaurs often weep merely at its mention. In the poem, the Bastion exists partly above and partly below ground and grows constantly. An army of minotaur craftsmen (many of which are slaves but some who work for joy) and a host of undead minotaurs ruled by Iasona toil endlessly to grow the vast cathedral. It is built in honor of Hecate, yet the priestess oddly twists the doctrines and philosophies of the Lady of Sighs and Tears. Iasona extolls the view that everything that is not minotaur is an enemy of the minotaur—or will be one day—and her twisted vision of Hecate has caused her to seek to spread her glory in her own cold, mistaken way.

The Folly (as some minotaurs refer to it mockingly) is vast, a hymn in stone to Hecate and the abilities of the minotaur crafters who work here, and this work has been going on for centuries. Each wall is carved with a thousand faces, each chamber themed—some are swirling in stone flowers or carved trees so beautiful that they actually bloom. Impossibly graceful spiral stairs wind upward into the dizzying space below the gables, which are supported by thousands upon thousands

of angels. Somehow, songs are woven into the very stones of the building and graceful singing echoes at all times, praising the Opener of Doors. However, the paranoid mind of Iasona has crammed the place with guardians and a small but powerful group of fanatical spies and creatures called the Horns of Iasona. These stalk the mazes of the world (and other places), seeking the greatest craftsmen and guardians and treasures as well as enemies of Hecate. Unfortunately, to the fervent mind of their demented priestess, what constitutes an enemy can be varied to the point of madness: is it not possible that even those devoutly worshipping Hecate herself are tricking the goddess? To Iasona, enemies lurk behind smiles and may be very close at hand.

To Broken, she is a heroine who must be courted. Their minds share a vision of a race persecuted by others and that must defend itself or fail. The two infest each other's dreams and have become lovers in the world of thoughts. Broken sees enemies in shadows and dwells in a dead war; her friendship is something he seeks, arguing that to have such an ally, graced with a *Book of Doors* (see below), could purge all enemies of the minotaurs.

For now, the waking times of the Poet cause Broken to forget where the search has taken the First Labyrinth's groping corridors, but its insane messages to Iasona reach her loudly. The quest of Broken to save Roshgazi is conducted at a distance until the two meet at last and their quest can truly be consummated with a crusade that will be sung throughout time.

The House of the Mad Kobold

Beware the sound of great cogs and gears turning, for that may herald the House of the Mad Kobold Abrin.

It is said that the Mad Kobold was a captive of the minotaur for many decades and learnt from them the ways of mazes and

their essence, stealing their darkest secrets before escape. A master wizard of the clockwork domain and worshipper of Rava the Clockwork Oracle, Abrin consorted with dragons who used his copious talents to aid them in their conquering and to defend their precious hordes. But Abrin delved too deep into the dark and twisted corners of the Great Labyrinth where madness and the despair of the lost lurks. His mind became locked with those dark places and unraveled as they tattooed their secrets onto his soul. Centuries passed as the Mad Kobold built about himself a maze made of madness—his House—to protect himself. The kobold was obsessed only with his own safety, toiling alone for long years as his mind became focused on one thing—on his own continuation.

As his frail body finally neared collapse, the Mad Kobold disappeared. Died some say. Others whisper something else.

They say that his lonely house has only one occupant of flesh and bone and that its mechanisms toil away under the gaze of a single machine that lurks at its very heart.



A machine with a wicked heart. And within that heart lurks the Mad Kobold's sleepless essence, seeking to continue, to perfect his own skin. Surrounded by clockwork servitors that exist in mockery of a mundane life, the Mad Kobold has become king over a domain of metal.

The World Maze: Vault of Mammon, Morsel of Hell

The mazes of Hell, they say, have no equal.

The Vault is no mere maze; it is a world, a hollow world of anger locked in perpetual nightfall at the edge of the event that destroys it. The day it was swallowed by Mammon. The archdevil's vast, bloated form hangs in the heavens of this dying world, a world that offended the Archdevil of Greed, his salivating mouth agape in the act of devouring. His monstrous form filling the dark sky.

Below, this hollow world has become torment. Scoured across its skin is an endless maze, a maze that holds the people who dared to offend him. Their lives are one of survival and despair under the mocking gaze of their tormentor. Into this maze, the archdevil cast his brood, things stepped out from children's nightmares and given flesh. These odd creatures stagger the maze wanting, hungering, mocking. To further show his displeasure, the Archdevil of Greed took all the beauty of this world and hung it in his palace at the Halls of Avarice, sucking the soul of the place and leaving it a dead sphere riddled with endless tunnels into which his children—his hunting rats—feed on those left until at last, hungry, they will turn on themselves and leave nothing. Such is the end of those who refuse those who want.

His eye is wrath as it gazes down with detached amusement at what he has created: a symphony of suffering. Sometimes that laughter is heard, or more often felt, by those who step into the Great Labyrinth...

Other Vaults in the Dark

It is endless, as we have already said, but its darkest corners lurk so close. The songs and poems of minotaurs name a thousand, thousand places within the Great Labyrinth; some are apocryphal, surely, but many have a knack of growing skin and bones and doorways, looming out of the stories and into your path.

Beware the Terrible Endless Stair of Tharb: some say those who walk the stair do so for all time or perhaps find heaven at its summit—or hell at its base. The Swallowing Maw lies somewhere out there, bards say, a dungeon that hungers for visitors to feed its lonely madness and many mouths. If you hear a howling song on the wind, is it the stalking Hound of Garth that hunts the Great Labyrinth with its sisters? Does that door conceal the Singer of Blood Songs with her countless hungry children? Is that whistling the Grymm of Dar who hobbles on his staff made of the stolen feet of travelers he meets within the Great Labyrinth and who would dare step through the Portal of the Wan King and meet the ruler itself?

Once a door is open and her threshold crossed, there is sometimes no stepping back.

Beware the darkness, my friend!

The Book of Doors (Artifact)

The greatest and most ancient of minotaur maze priests spent their days toiling at a single work—the so-called *Book of Doors*. The book details every aspect of the Plane of the Great Labyrinth, a catalogue of mazes, but it is so much more than that. Part religious supplication to the goddess Hecate, these magnificent tomes are clothed in gold and jewels and chained to the chamber in which they were created and which forms part of their unique magic. Remove the book from its (usually adamantine) chain and room, it withers—and any wrathful magic weaved into its fabric is then released.

It would be correct to call the entire book an artifact; however, since its component parts are found scattered across the labyrinth of the world, it is more properly considered fragments of a single artifact, yet artifacts themselves. Some worshippers of Hecate are bound by a vision they share—possibly before an earthquake threatens the Plane of the Great Labyrinth or when conversely its riddle is about to be solved and all of creation swallowed by its joy and beautiful deliberate confusion. They believe that at that time all the component tomes will be drawn into a single chamber at the heart of the plane and herald something momentous.

THE BOOK OF DOORS

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

Each book is unique, sumptuously illustrated and weighing as much as an adult minotaur. They are always encountered in chambers richly displayed with wondrous scenes weaved with dire warnings about the ignorant attempting to steal or deface the book. All books are sealed with a clasp made of carved minotaur fingerbones (often of a saint) that are intricately woven into a metal clasp designed to look like an incredibly complex



maze: this maze is a lock, and only by tracing the correct pattern through the maze with a finger (or other appendage) can the book be opened. All other attempts result in the book being destroyed and any protection magic released. A minotaur can automatically see the way through the maze lock to its heart and thus trigger the opening; all other characters must make a DC 25 Intelligence check to do so.

Gateways. The book contains a number of illustrations of aspects of the Great Labyrinth. Characters attuned to the artifact are able to use these pages to summon a portal, which remains until dismissed by the attuned character in question. If that character is slain, the gateway remains permanently in place. Each aspect of the book contains 1d12 such pages. The locations of which can be chosen by the GM; such locations are not limited by where the book is or at what time or in which plane of existence. This makes ownership of the books something many seek—particularly in those rare books that are able to trigger portals into different times.

Vengeful. Each tome has a unique vengeful aspect if the book is destroyed or removed from the chamber it is linked to—something that also always destroys the book. Such magic is invariably associated with mazes: sometimes the despoiler is magically drawn into a maze spell that they share with something suitably terrible such as an ophanim angel (see *Creature Codex*) or gypsopshinx (see *Tome of Beasts*) that stalk the violators through the maze and occasionally keeps returning time after time despite destruction. Sometimes it is the maze itself that is the revenge; stories circulate of inescapable mazes where victims starve to death or—much worse—endlessly walk in solitude through eternity.

Random Properties. 2 major beneficial properties, 1 minor detrimental property.

Possible Adventures

All mazes linking to one gives you a great way to introduce something that runs contrary to the location the PCs are in—and design an adventure accordingly. What happens if the crooked children of Mammon stumble through a strange new opening from the World Maze and into the long-abandoned dungeons above the village of Clubbman. Do greedy maze-hunter minotaurs arrive at a remote mountain village en masse, the Hecate-obsessed Horns of Iasona here looking for a Book of Doors? These minotaurs stop at nothing to achieve their end, but whispers about vaults groaning with treasure soon reach the PCs' ears. During a mundane exploration of a small dungeon filled with hobgoblins, the PCs suddenly hear gears clicking and run into clockwork abominations. Does the mission change to simply trying to find a way home, or does the PCs' clockwork host have another use for the PCs?

Who knows what lurks around the next corner, my friend.

The Enigma of the Heart of the First Labyrinth

For those of you interested in learning more about Broken and the Poet, check out the forthcoming tremendous adventure *An Enigma Lost in a Maze* from Kobold Press.

The fractured Heart of Roshgazi reaches out in madness for aid, just as an enormous black dragon and a small army of kobolds arrives at the ruined city seeking it. An Enigma Lost in a Maze is an adventure for 5th Edition and is designed for 5th- or 6th-level characters.



TREASURE VAULTS OF MIDGARD

by Mike Welham

Many are those needing to store wealth, information, and other odds and ends they'd prefer not fall into the hands of thieves. All across Midgard, special repositories are built to this end: difficult to locate and access and often featuring traps and guardians to destroy intruders. Here are detailed but a few of those.

Bemmean Wandering Vault

The Wandering Vault is a semi-sentient construct that roams the Magocracy of Allain. The hexagonal building measures 40 feet on each side and is 20 feet tall. It is invisible and can become ethereal (rendering all creatures and objects within ethereal as well) for 10 rounds as a reaction, so it escapes the notice of most. It crawls on a thousand pairs of metal, millipede-like appendages, giving it a speed of 150 feet. It has a fly speed of 50 feet, and it can take an action to teleport up to 1 mile if an unauthorized creature attempts to breach it. The vault can take an action to attack with its appendages, making up to two attacks per creature within 10 feet of the building (*Walking Appendage*. *Melee Weapon* *Attack*: +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 20 (2d10+9) bludgeoning damage).

Very few people outside of the nine archmages of Allain have Bemmean key wands that unlock the vault. A successful

DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check fools the locking mechanism into unlocking while a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools bypasses the locking mechanism. On a failure by 5 or more, the creature making the check is targeted by *disintegrate* as though cast with a 9th-level spell slot.

Entering the vault is easy compared to exploring it. The layout forms a variety of sigils, each of which terminates at the beginning of a new sigil. The confounding paths created by these sigils sometimes overlap, incorporating portions of other sigils and making it difficult to walk each sigil perfectly as required. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check discerns the path of each sigil, which terminates at the beginning of a new sigil. A creature that fails to follow the path must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage (determined randomly) on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Six iron golems patrol the vault's halls and are not required to follow the path of the sigils. The golems challenge all visitors to the vault, but presenting a Bemmean key wand to a patrolling golem allows the bearer and all creatures designated by the bearer to pass freely. A successful DC 18 Intelligence

(Arcana) check using an object that requires attunement by a spellcaster simulates the key wand. Alternatively, a successful DC 22 Charisma (Deception) check tricks the golem into believing the character presented a key wand. Failure on either check causes the iron golem to attack. It fights to the death and pursues creatures until they leave the building. (Note, also, that creatures failing to follow the path of sigils take damage as above.)

The vault is rumored to hold dangerous, powerful magic items and artifacts from the Great Mage Wars as well as ancient grimoires containing horrific knowledge, usually pertaining to the terrible entities roaming the Wasted West. The vault's extreme protections and difficulty to locate support the notion that it contains items the Magocracy does not want to fall into the wrong hands.



Dragon Empire Vaults

Most dragons in the Dragon Empire prefer their hoards easily accessible, either in buildings they own or on their own person, so they can admire their accumulation of wealth. However, paranoid or ostentatious dragons sometimes commission vaults where they store their hoards. Distrustful dragons consider the cost of a vault worth the protection granted by the structure. Flashier dragons see these vaults as a representation of their wealth and practically dare thieves to attempt to break into their vaults and loot them.

Regardless of the purpose for the vaults, the dragons commissioning them also hire kobolds to build diabolical traps. They also bring in drakes to serve as guardians with the promise of a reward (or fulfilling a term

of punishment) upon completion of their service. Coin drakes enjoy living in coin-filled hoards and often protect vaults merely for the pleasure of swimming in the coins contained within.

A vault in the dragon empire typically contains material wealth in the form of coins, gems, and jewels. Powerful dragons also sequester magic items—either items they take a liking to or those capable of harming dragons—in their hoards.

Spike Spike Trap. Kobolds created this two-step trap, which triggers when a creature opens the trapped door or chest. Each spike makes a ranged attack with a +8 bonus

against up to four random targets within 20 feet of the trapped item. (The spike does not need to see a creature to attack it.) A target that is hit takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being impaled by the spike.

A creature can take an action to remove a spike with a successful DC 12 Strength check. Regardless of the check's success, pulling the spike out inflicts 3 (1d6) damage to the target.

One round later, on initiative count 10, a volley of spikes magnetically attracted to the first group of spikes launches from the other side of the chamber. All creatures within the chamber make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) piercing damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. Creatures impaled by a spike in the previous round have disadvantage on their saving throws.

Prevention: A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check notices holes in the trapped object. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, disabling the firing mechanism. A failure on this check triggers the trap.

Another successful check spots the holes in the opposite side of the chamber. A successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the second part of the trap. A failure on this check only triggers the second part of the trap.

COIN DRAKE

Layers of coins of all description cover this draconic creature's head, body, and tail. Its teeth and claws appear to be coins filed down to a fine point.

Living Treasure. Coin drakes are their own hoard. When adult drakes produce an egg, they find a suitable pile of coins in which to place the egg. As coin drakes grow older and larger, they add more coins to their bodies and replace coins of lesser value with those

of greater value. Coin drakes not associated with another dragon's hoard must constantly replenish coins they lose in combat. When they are killed, they collapse into a heap of coins.

Watchful Wardens. Coin drakes among a pile of coins become attuned to the coins and can sense movement of those coins. This makes them excellent guardians of coin-filled hoards belonging to more powerful dragons who don't mind the loss of a handful of coins to drakes who must rebuild themselves after a fight.

Coin Dependent. Coin drakes measure 3 feet long and weigh 50 pounds with most of that weight from coins. Plucking individual coins from the drakes is difficult, but it sheds them when it engages in vigorous activity. A "naked" coin drake often dies within an hour of losing its last coin, prompting a desperate search for replacements.

COIN DRAKE

Small dragon, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (11d6 + 44)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +5

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, unconscious

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Coin Sense. The coin drake has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on vibrations when a creature comes into contact with coins within 20 feet of the drake.

False Appearance. While the coin drake remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a pile of coins.

ACTIONS

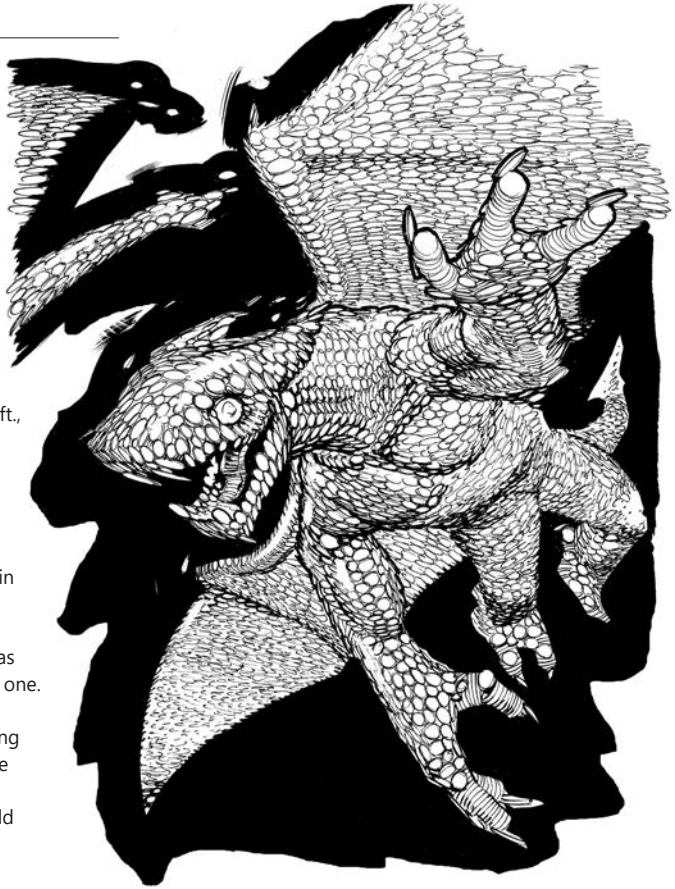
Multiattack. The coin drake makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

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

Hurled Coins. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Molten Gold (Recharge 5–6). The coin drake expels gold heated within its body in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 33 (6d10) fire damage or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its save is restrained by the rapidly cooling gold. As an action, the creature can make a DC 15 Strength check, breaking free of the gold on a success.



The Frozen Bastion

The northern reaches of Jotunheim hosts the Frozen Bastion, a repository of wealth and devastating weaponry commissioned by Boreas and Loki. A squadron of eighteen **frost giants** guards the lone peak containing the vault. None of the giants are aware of the vault's existence, and they are afraid to inquire about the mountain's contents. They are aware of the **ancient white dragon** dwelling within the mountain and providing additional protection for the vault. The dragon spends most of its time slumbering in its lair, but its rare emergences to hunt for food may alert canny observers to the presence of something significant.

No living creatures guard the vault's interior. Instead, a ghost dragon (see *Creature Codex*) and a dozen quiet souls (see *Creature Codex*) roam the halls. These undead can sense any living creature who enters the vault, and they gather together as a group to attack intruders. Creatures killed by a quiet soul within the Frozen Bastion rise as a new quiet soul one round later, bolstering the guardians' numbers.

The vault is inhospitable to creatures without immunity to cold. A creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw at the end of each minute spent within the vault to avoid taking 5 (1d10) cold damage.

Nearly all items contained within the Frozen Bastion are entombed in solid ice. Piles of coins, gems, and jewels, seemingly added to the vault within the past few days, are free of the ice. However, the ice appears to creep inexorably over this newly deposited wealth. A spell or effect that deals fire damage removes a 1-inch layer of ice in the area of the spell or effect for every 10 points of fire damage dealt. Alternatively (or additionally for a weapon that also deals fire damage), 20 points of weapon damage clears an inch of ice. Harming the ice triggers the vault's defense mechanism, which attempts to encase the origin of the spell or effect in ice. A targeted creature must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by ice. An inch of ice forms around the restrained target each round thereafter. Until the ice solidifies, a creature can take an action to make a DC 17 Strength check to free a creature restrained by the ice. After the ice forms, fire or weapon damage is necessary to free the target. A creature stuck in the ice takes 5 (1d10) cold damage. If it dies as a result of the cold damage, it becomes a quiet soul one round later.

Most of the material wealth not sheathed in ice is illusory, owing to Loki's influence in the vault's design. A creature that takes illusory treasure must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom check to disbelieve the illusion. When a creature that failed its save spends this illusory wealth, the illusion fades 1 minute after the treasure is handed over. If this is done in the Northlands, this usually results in a negative status change for the creature and its associates even if the creature makes up for the unintended indiscretion immediately.

The Frozen Bastion is rumored to hold a battleaxe capable of inflicting grievous wounds on cold creatures and able to wound Boreas. The same rumors say that Boreas cannot destroy the axe, so he keeps it here, out of the hands of his foes.

Treasury of the Maze

This vault, built by the minotaurs below Gramvar on the Serene Isle of Kypriion, was once protected by an honor guard of minotaurs. Its twisty hallways that seemed to turn back on each other also confounded intruders. With the recent razing of Gramvar, however, the vault no longer has its minotaur guardians. Instead, treasure hunters must contend with demons and fiery undead, such as alnaar demons (see *Creature Codex*) and perpetually burning tar ghouls (see *Creature Codex*), to gain access to the vault. Fortunately, none of these unwelcome creatures have been able to reach the vault's treasures at the maze's center.

The maze is nearly impossible for non-minotaurs to navigate. At normal speed and without any unexpected detours, it takes 3 hours to reach the center. Every 10 minutes spent in the maze requires creatures traversing its corridors to succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence check to avoid becoming lost for 20 minutes. On a failure by 5 or more, this period increases to 1 hour. Intruders who managed to evade the minotaurs often succumbed to dehydration and starvation trying to find their way out of the maze. Those who managed to discover the exit often turned themselves over to the minotaurs, so they could receive treatment. For those who decide to rely on devices to mark a path through the maze rather than their wits, the maze has arcane measures in place to destroy physical objects, such as twine, or to erase chalk markings and the like.

The vault at the center of the maze is not unprotected as a pair of stone golems crafted to look like hulking minotaurs wielding massive axes stand sentry. (These golems replace one of their slam attacks with a battleaxe attack, dealing the equivalent amount of slashing damage as their slam attacks.) The golems are programmed to inform non-minotaur visitors they are

prohibited to enter the vault. Minotaurs can freely pass the sentries and designate others to enter the vault. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check allows passage as well, but a failure on this check provokes the golems to attack. They otherwise do not attack unless a creature attempts to pass by them or attacks one of them. Once engaged, one of the golems pursues fleeing creatures while the other remains at its post. The golems can navigate the maze without difficulty.

The vault is rumored to contain weapons and relics important to the minotaurs and brought to Kypriion by minotaurs fleeing Kadralhu and Roshgazi. One such item of great significance is the Ivory Comb of Hecate.

Treetop Vault of Tomierran

Many people envision vaults as structures locked away underground, but the elves of the Tomierran Forest have chosen an equally inaccessible location for their treasure repository among the boughs of the forest's taller trees, standing in the shadow of the corrupt World Tree.

Accessing the vault initially requires a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to find the correct branches to traverse and a successful DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check to ascend the branches. Eight additional checks, each requiring 10 minutes' worth of work, are necessary to reach the vault, and each check increases the DC by 1. Failing the Wisdom (Survival) check by less than 5 delays the journey by 10 minutes as no progress is made while failing the check by 5 or more requires the first creature attempting its Strength (Acrobatics) check to succeed on a Dexterity saving throw at the same DC as the Wisdom (Survival) check or fall a distance equal to

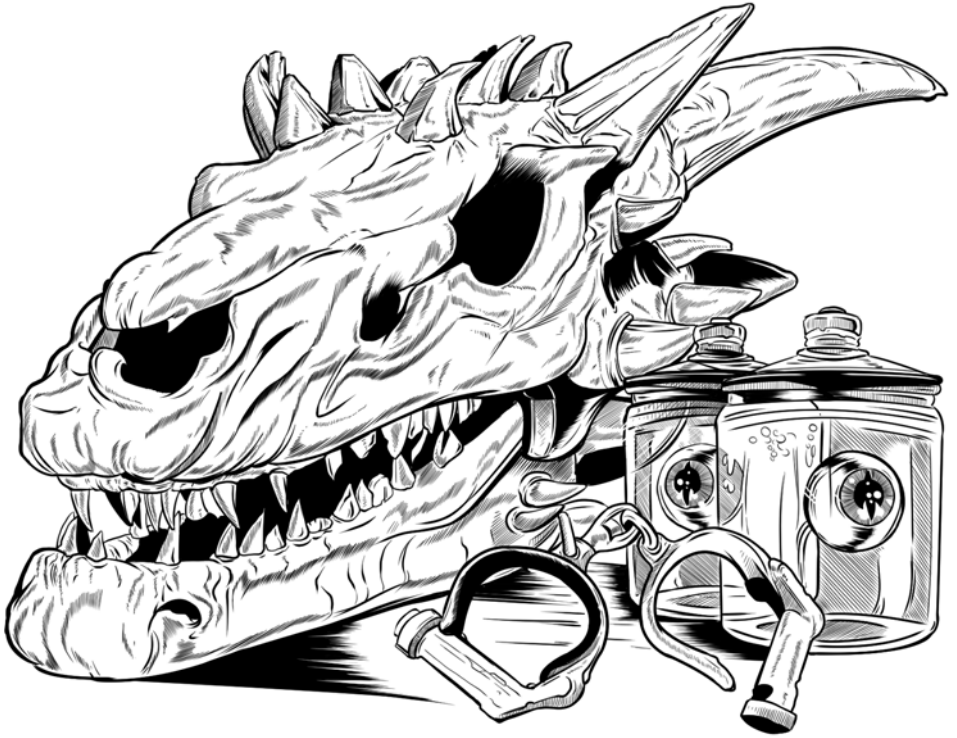
10 feet times the save DC value. Failing the Strength (Athletics) check by 5 or more results in the same fall without a chance for a saving throw.

The vault is open to the sky, which makes it accessible to flying creatures. The vault is cleverly concealed, so a DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) check notices it from above. Additionally, twenty rocs patrol the skies around the vault and attack unauthorized creatures. Finally, if an unauthorized creature flies into the vault, a dispel magic spell cast using an 8th-level spell slot targets the creature.

Navigation within the vault is fraught with danger as the leafy boughs conceal holes that result in fatal falls. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Survival) check notes these locations. If a creature travels more than 5 feet in a round and does not notice these empty spaces, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall 180 feet.

A cadre of fourteen wood golems (see *Creature Codex*) patrols the vault and has no difficulty navigating the treetop branches. These wood golems can make a special slam attack that pushes a target back 5 feet on a hit if the target fails a DC 16 Strength saving throw. If the target fails its Strength saving throw, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall 180 feet.

The Treetop Vault is rumored to contain ancient elven treasures left behind by the elves when they abandoned the forest. Additionally, the vault allegedly holds cultivars of animated plants, such as treants and wood golems. According to the rumors, tending these cultivars will produce full-grown specimens that follow the commands of the creature tending them.



MONSTERS



BOSS MONSTERS

by Celeste Conowitch, Scott Gable, Richard Green, TK Johnson,
Kelly Pawlik, Robert Schwalb, Mike Welham

Catscratch

The cat before you emits a horrific yowl as its body begins to bulge and swell. Within moments, a massive veined form covered in patches of fur casts a mad gaze upon you.

Not of This World. A catscratch comes from parts unknown. No one is quite sure of its source, but wherever domestic cats are found, these creatures appear. It is a hybrid monster, created when an aberrant virus infects a cat or cat-like humanoid.

Summoned by Rage. A community may not know a catscratch has affected their pets until it's too late. An infected cat will not transform until it becomes angry. Once a cat is sufficiently upset, it immediately swells to a massive size, intent on destroying everything in sight.

CATSCRATCH

Huge aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d12 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

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

Nine Lives. When the catscratch would be reduced to 0 hit points, it instead drops to 9 hit points. This feature can only be used once per encounter.

Pounce. If the catscratch moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the catscratch can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The catscratch makes one bite attack and one claw attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. Any felids or feline humanoids that fail this saving throw immediately contract catscratch fugue (see sidebar).

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Vomit (Recharge 5–6). The catscratch vomits poisonous bile in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Any felids or feline humanoids that fail this saving throw immediately contract catscratch fugue (see sidebar).



CATSCRATCH FUGUE

Catscratch fugue is a bacterial infection that only affects felids and feline humanoids. This infectious organism is carried to earth by falling stars and transmitted either through contact with the crash site or by being bitten by a carrier.

Upon contact, the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become infected. Once infected, catscratch fugue incubates in the host for 3 days. During this window, the victim's skin itches, and they will be prone to

violent mood swings. At the end of each day, the infected can repeat the saving throw to see if they stave off the infection. A lesser restoration spell will also cure the disease in this incubation time.

After the 3-day window, if the infection is still present, any negative emotion will cause the victim to transform into a monstrous catscratch intent on destroying everything around it. There is no cure once the victim has transformed.

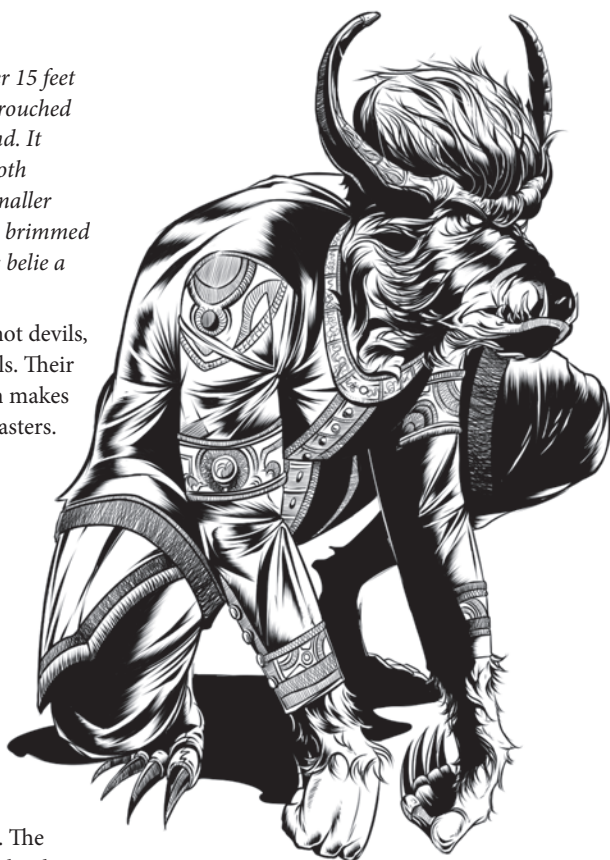
Vexxeh

This bestial creature would stand over 15 feet tall if erect but is more comfortable crouched with its knuckles resting on the ground. It wears a pair of trousers and a vest, both obviously made for someone much smaller than it, and a shallow, round-topped brimmed hat rests on its head. Its cunning eyes belie a malignant intelligence.

Bound to Service. Though they are not devils, vexxeh are natives of the Eleven Hells. Their susceptibility to magical domination makes them ideal lieutenants for evil spellcasters. Once a vexxeh has agreed to serve a master, it adheres to the letter of the agreement that has been struck and will not break the contract even under the threat of destruction.

Lovers of Carnage. Vexxeh only know joy when they are harming living creatures. They relish battle, enjoying the opportunity to shed blood and break bones. More than combat, however, vexxeh enjoy torturing mortals, especially if there is no purpose to it. The psychic distress and trauma suffered by the victims of their torture makes vexxeh gleeful.

Fiendishly Polite. Despite their love of violence, vexxeh are unfailingly polite. They mimic the etiquette and social norms of the culture their current master belongs to, going so far as to affect mannerisms of nobility. Even when rending a creature into bloody chunks, a vexxeh seems regretful and apologetic.



Saving Throws Str +8, Wis +3

Skills Intimidation +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities poisoned, unconscious

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Infernal

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

VEXXEH

Huge fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Four-Legged Lope. When the vexxeh uses its action to Dash, it moves at three times its speed.

Weak Willed. The vexxeh has disadvantage on saving throws against being charmed.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vexxeh makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Rend. If the vexeh hits a creature with two claw attacks in one round, it does an extra 14 (4d6) damage.

Gulper Behemoth

The titanic eel-like creature has delicately dancing frills and flickers of phosphorescence just under its translucent skin. Its mouth opens impossibly wide as it surges forward.

Deep Sea Lure. The gulper behemoth lives in the waters of the Western Ocean. It lures sea dwellers to their deaths with dancing motes of light within its massive, ballooning gullet—some have speculated the low population of whales may be directly related. Rumors abound that even a sharp pinprick will deflate the sea monster, but brightly colored and labyrinthine giant corals and smaller, mutualistic predators keep their lairs well protected from hunters.

GULPER BEHEMOTH

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 195 (13d20 + 65)

Speed 0 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities piercing

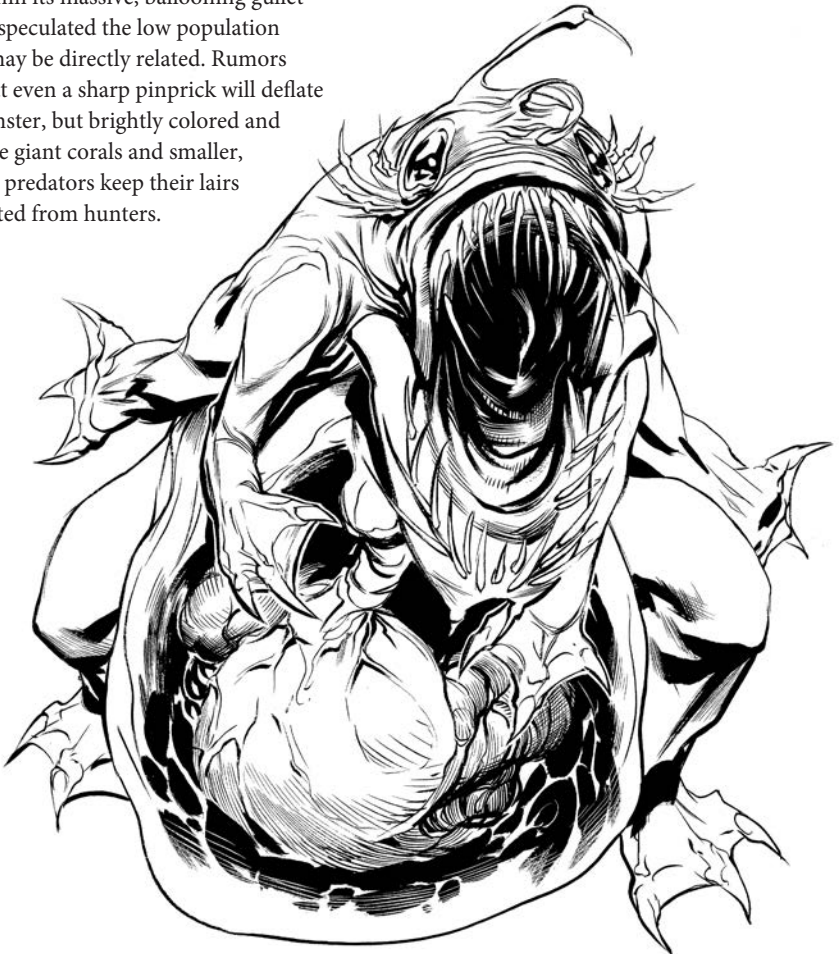
Damage Resistances acid, thunder

Condition Immunities blinded

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception

Languages —

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)



Death Burst. The gulper behemoth explodes when it drops to 0 hit points. Each creature within 40 feet of it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) acid damage on a failed save. Being underwater doesn't grant resistance against this damage.

Echolocation. The gulper behemoth can't use its blindsight while deafened.

Keen Hearing. The gulper behemoth has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 40 (6d10 + 7) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the gulper behemoth can't bite another target.

Swallow. The gulper behemoth makes one bite attack against a Large or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target takes the bite's damage, the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the behemoth, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the behemoth's turns.

If the gulper behemoth takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the behemoth must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the behemoth. If the behemoth dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the carcass by using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Sonic Pulse (Recharge 5–6). The gulper behemoth expels a sonic pulse in a 60-foot cone. Each creature must succeed a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) thunder damage and be stunned until the end of the behemoth's next turn. On a successful save, the target takes half the thunder damage and isn't stunned.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the gulper behemoth takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects.

- Deep sea eels patrol inside of the gulper behemoth's lair, seeking easy targets left behind, attempting to constrict them. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become restrained.
- Foliage shoots boiling water at creatures inside the gulper behemoth's lair in a 15-foot cone. Each target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Being underwater doesn't grant resistance against this damage.

The Pumpkin King

Wooden roots twist together to create a towering spindle draped in a cloak of verdant leaves. Crowning the figure is an impossibly large pumpkin carved with a twisted smile.

Lord of Harvest. The Pumpkin King is a minor fey lord who rules over bounteous harvest, particularly in the autumnal seasons before snow blankets the world. The Pumpkin King can make a region flourish, changing barren farms and struggling villages into fruitful locales with a single blessing.

Unknown Deal. The Pumpkin King listens from their hidden patch in the Summer Lands, waiting to hear the desperate pleas of struggling farmers and starving villagers. Once the Pumpkin King hears such a request, they place their blessing upon the land, bringing ten years of prosperity. What the farmers do not know is that upon the moonrise of that tenth year, the Pumpkin King returns to collect the promised share of the harvest. The Pumpkin King has no compassion for the locals and may unknowingly destroy an entire village as they enjoy their moonlit feast.

THE PUMPKIN KING

Huge fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d12 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	21 (+5)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't cold iron

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The Pumpkin King's innate spellcasting ability score is Charisma (save DC 16, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The Pumpkin King can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At Will: *entangle*

3/day each: *plant growth*, *spike growth*

1/day: *insect plague*

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the Pumpkin King fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Pumpkin King makes four vine attacks.

Vine. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16).

Harvest Dance (1/Day). As an action, the Pumpkin King can summon a swirling mass of gourds and vegetables. This vortex extends in a 15-foot radius from the Pumpkin King. Until the effect ends, the area is difficult terrain, and when a creature enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, they must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. This vortex persists for three rounds before dissipating.



Clockwork Archon

The air around this massive construct is filled with the sound of spinning gears and mechanisms. The sheer size of a clockwork archon is staggering. The spectacle of an entire unit of them has been known to drive enemy armies from the field before they have even taken to it.

Servants of the Righteous. Clockwork archons are built to fight in the names of deities devoted to justice, battle, and glory. They stand as bulwarks upon the battlefields of the holy, offering a rallying point for paladins and crusaders. Churches that have the ability to manufacture clockwork archons guard the knowledge jealously, lest it falls into the hands of the unworthy.

Engines of War. Clockwork archons are deployed as support vehicles and weapons. A single archon can quickly reduce a small settlement's defenses to ruin, while groups of them can swiftly render fortified structures to rubble. Armies with clockwork archons at their disposal sometimes use them to move sensitive material and personnel into position.

Corruptible Constructs. On occasion, a clockwork archon is captured by the enemy. The followers of some evil gods, archdevils, and demon lords have determined methods of overwriting the construct's animating magic, turning the creature to their fell purposes. More than one community has had its cheer turn to dismay as the clockwork archon they freely allowed inside the walls disgorged enemy agents while attacking the structures and residents. More insidious cults use their clockwork archons to mask their true natures. They allow the common folk to believe they represent good faiths while they rot the community's moral fabric from the inside.



CLOCKWORK ARCHON

Gargantuan construct, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 201 (13d20 + 65)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	9 (-1)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +9

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Armored Transport. The clockwork archon can carry up to six Medium or eight Small creatures inside its torso. The two escape hatches can each be opened as a bonus action. One creature traveling inside the clockwork archon may exit from either of the hatches in a round, on their turn.

Immutable Form. The clockwork archon is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Siege Construct. The clockwork archon ignores the damage threshold of objects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clockwork archon makes two attacks with its transforming weapon.

Transforming Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 39 (5d12 + 7) damage. As a bonus action, the archon can change its sword into a warhammer or vice versa. The transforming weapon deals slashing damage as a sword or bludgeoning damage as a warhammer.


Fire from Heaven (Recharge 5–6). The clockwork archon unleashes a brilliant beam in a 90-foot line that is 10-feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 58 (13d8) radiant damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Death Barque (Necrotech)

Drifting across the dark water is a hideous vessel made from skin and bones and with tattered sails of crudely stitched leather. Its macabre figurehead is a skeletal vulture-headed sphinx, and a long, bony spiked tail protrudes from its stern. As the figurehead turns to stare at you with its unnatural glowing green eyes, you realize that the bone ship is alive—or rather, undead.

Grotesque Hybrid. The death barque is an undead creature built in the form of a ship to combat the threat of the aboleth on the Sunless Sea and elsewhere in the Ghoul Imperium. Its 50-foot-long body is constructed from hardened purple worm hides stretched taut over the ribcage of a giant subterranean shark. Its figurehead was once a gypsosphinx while its tail belonged to a cave dragon. The first death barque was developed by Smiling Magerette, a drow darakhul who is now the wizard-general of the Harvester Legion. A talented necromancer, Magerette created other necrotech, including ether towers and zombie-legged battering rams during her time in the Necrophagi.

Patrolling the Sunless Sea. Death barques typically carry a dozen zombies armed with



The darakhul of the Ghoul Imperium have long practiced necromancy, using the corpses and bones of Underworld denizens to create new undead servants and devise powerful war machines to aid in their conquest of the subterranean lands. Under Emperor Nicoforus, the darakhul necromancers, known as the Necrophagi, have prospered in their mission to develop experimental necrotech, and their progress has accelerated over the last decade, thanks to the blasphemous volumes of eldritch lore gifted to the ghouls by the vampires of Morgau and Doresh in exchange for their military aid against Krakova.

glaives and chained to the barque's deck with hooks through their flesh to prevent them becoming lost overboard. But it's the death barque that is the true threat. Its sphinxlike figurehead is capable of breathing a deadly cone of necrotic energy, and its spiked tail can launch explosive bone shards at its enemies.

DEATH BARQUE

Gargantuan undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 264 (12d20 + 72)

Speed swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	18 (+4)	23 (+6)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +10, Wis +6

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances psychic

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Darakhul, Deep Speech

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Immutable Form. The death barque is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Siege Monster. The death barque deals double damage to objects and structures.

Turn Resistance. The death barque has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.



ACTIONS

Multiattack. The death barque makes a bite attack and a tail smash attack.

Bite. Melee weapon attack: +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Tail Smash. Melee weapon attack: +9 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (7d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6). The death barque exhales a dark cloud of necrotic energy from its figurehead in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 60 (11d10) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Shrapnel Burst. The death barque launches a ball of bone shards from its tail at a point within 120 feet, which explodes in a 10-foot radius. Creatures in the area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) piercing damage and being blinded for 1 minute on a failed save or half as much damage and avoiding the blinding effect on a successful one.

Pustulent Shambler

Piles of dissolved bones, seemingly eaten away by acid, encircle this mound of quivering, pus-covered flesh.

Dissolvers of Bone. Crawling heaps of diseased flesh, pustulent shamblers possess a corrosive material that eats away at bone matter. They also carry a terrible disease that rots a victim's bones from within, rendering the victim immobile as its skeleton wastes away.

Keepers of Macabre Larders. Pustulent shamblers drag victims of bonerot to their lairs to feed on the boneless flesh. Though they idly devour their victims, they have enough awareness of potential retribution so keep a few corpses available to quickly heal themselves. When hunting, pustulent shamblers often carry corpses with them, taking them far from their lairs.

Connected to Bonerot. Pustulent shamblers have a preternatural link to the disease they inflict. This allows them to track escaping

victims and be present when the disease overtakes their prey. While pustulent shamblers have rudimentary intelligence, their relationship to the disease allows them to recognize other shamblers. They work together to harvest food when it is plentiful. Predictably, shamblers turn on each other when sources of flesh become scarce.

Ooze Nature. The pustulent shambler doesn't require sleep.

PUSTULENT SHAMBLER

Gargantuan ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 186 (12d20 + 60)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	5 (-3)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Damage Immunities acid, fire, necrotic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

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

Languages —

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Amorphous. The pustulent shambler can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Bonerot. A creature infected with this disease by a pustulent shambler's pseudopod takes 1d4 Strength damage and 1d6 Dexterity damage, and the infected creature's walking speed is reduced by 10 feet. The creature must make a DC 18 Constitution save after each long rest. On a failure, the creature takes damage, and its walking speed is reduced as above. The creature recovers from the disease if its saving throw succeeds after two consecutive long rests or if it receives a *regenerate* spell or comparable magic. If the disease is cured through magic, the creature's walking speed is restored to full. Otherwise, its walking speed increases by 10 feet per day. Regardless of the method of cure, the creature recovers 2 Strength and Dexterity points per day naturally.

Bonerot Sense. The pustulent shambler is aware of all creatures infected with bonerot up to a mile away, regardless of the infection's source.

Corrosive to Bone. A creature with exposed bones (such as a skeleton) that hits the pustulent shambler takes 5 (1d10) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon made of bone that hits the shambler corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If the penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of bone that hits the shambler is destroyed after taking damage.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the pustulent shambler must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the shambler's stench for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The pustulent shambler makes three pseudopod attacks.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 11 (2d10) acid damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or contract bonerot.

Absorb Flesh. A pustulent shambler sharing a space with a corpse can consume it, regaining 10 hit points from a Small or Medium corpse, 20 hit points from a Large corpse, and 40 hit points from a Huge or larger corpse. If the corpse has intact bones, the shambler loses its Amorphous trait for 1 minute.



Incarinate Gloom

This inky black cloud exudes an terrible chill and seems to tear at the soul, inducing a feeling of despondency and loneliness.

Despair Given Form. Incarnate glooms result when a group of people numbering at least a dozen suffer from hopelessness and die without receiving any relief from this feeling. This collective negative emotion coalesces into a nebulous form that seeks out more despair to feed upon.

Whisperer in the Darkness. An incarnate gloom takes perverse pleasure in picking off members of a larger group one at a time. It surrounds a chosen victim and telepathically imparts a sense of isolation on its quarry.

Will-o'-Wisp Symbiosis. Incarnate glooms work with will-o'-wisps to attract prey to the glooms' dark masses. Though incarnate glooms snuff out light in their vicinity, they allow the light produced by the smaller undead to shine, providing a false sense of security to potential victims.

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

INCARNATE GLOOM

Gargantuan undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 207 (18d20 + 18)

Speed fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wis +7

Skills Intimidation +10, Stealth +9

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

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common; telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Calm Emotions Vulnerability. If the incarnate gloom ends its turn in an area affected by the *calm emotions* spell, it takes 11 (2d10) psychic damage. Additionally, if the incarnate gloom is in an area affected by the spell, target creatures have advantage on saving throws against the gloom's despairing touch attack or Divide and Conquer.

Deepening Gloom. The incarnate gloom generates a 30-foot radius aura of darkness, which moves with it and spreads around corners. Darkvision can't penetrate this darkness, and no natural light can illuminate it. If any of the darkness overlaps with an area of light created by a spell of 4th level or lower, the spell creating the light is dispelled.

Animals do not willingly approach within 30 feet of an incarnate gloom unless a master makes a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

Incorporeal Movement. The incarnate gloom 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.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The incarnate gloom can use its Divide and Conquer. It then makes two attacks with its despairing touch.

Despairing Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 32 (6d8 + 5) psychic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the beginning of the incarnate gloom's next turn.

Divide and Conquer (Recharge 4–6). The incarnate gloom envelops one Large or smaller creature in its space. The creature must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being enveloped. While enveloped, the creature is blind, deaf, and restrained. It takes 27 (6d8) psychic damage at the start of each of the incarnate gloom's turns and must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma save or gain one level of exhaustion. Additionally, the creature believes it has been separated from its companions and



must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma save each time it is targeted by a beneficial spell or the effects of the spell are ignored. An enveloped creature can escape by using its action to make a successful DC 18 Charisma saving throw. An escaped creature reduces its exhaustion level by one for each minute after escaping (until it reaches the level of exhaustion it had before being affected by Divide and Conquer).

If the incarnate gloom kills a creature it has enveloped, it gains a number of hit points equal to half the victim's maximum hit points. If the gloom gains 100 hit points in this fashion, it splits into two incarnate glooms, with each possessing half the parent gloom's hit points. These incarnate glooms cannot split again until after completing a long rest.

Infernal Swarm

A towering winged devil looms above—bat wings, curving horns, spiked tail, goat legs, a wicked scimitar in its grasp. Its form continually shifts, subtly, as if driven by internal forces, giving the constant impression that it might just fall apart.

Infernal Insects. Infernal swarms can be found throughout the Eleven Hells and the lands linked to them. These hellish insects form a hive mind and use their enhanced magical abilities as defensive camouflage, projecting the illusion of a massive winged devil whenever they are threatened.

Considered a delicacy among the nobility in the Hells, the individual insects are bat-winged and have bulging eyes, long spindly legs, and a carapace covered in poisonous barbs that they fire to ward off predators.

A Hellish Feast. Infernal swarms feed on carrion and soul larvae, injecting the carcasses with a poison that liquifies tissue and organs for easier digestion. This same poison can be spread through their barbs to painfully dissuade predators, attacking and disintegrating whatever organic material with which it comes into contact. Hunters may easily become overwhelmed by these swarms and find themselves to be the meal.

A Scattered Mind. While an infernal swarm is resistant to psychic interference, it may be disrupted with a clever use of sound. Loud noises will disorient the insects and interrupt their illusions, scattering the individuals away from one another. While alone, in spite of possessing only an animal-like intelligence, these insects still prove formidable foes: they are capable of shooting their barbs and casting the spells *minor illusion*, *disguise self*, and *firebolt* at will. It is not common to encounter these silent killers hunting on their own, so if one is spotted, there are certain to be many more to follow.



INFERNAL SWARM

Huge swarm of Small fiends (devil), unaligned

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 143 (20d8 + 20)

Speed 25 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)

Damage Vulnerabilities thunder

Damage Resistances fire, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, grappled

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

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

Fear Aura. Any creature hostile to the infernal swarm that starts its turn within 20 feet of the swarm must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is frightened until the start of its next turn. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the infernal swarm's fear aura for the next 24 hours.

Innate Spellcasting. The infernal swarm's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*, *firebolt*, *minor illusion*

3/day each: *hallucinatory terrain*, *major image*

1/day each: *fireball*, *greater invisibility*, *immolation*

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

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

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

ACTIONS

Barbed Sting (Swarm). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 0 ft., three creatures in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) piercing damage or 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer, and the target must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Barbed Sting (Single). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60/120 ft. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 5 (1d10) poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Greataxe (Infernal Projection Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 58 (8d12 + 6) psychic damage. The target must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw to see through the illusion, taking full damage on a failed save. On a successful save, the target is immune to the illusion for the next 24 hours.

Bone Colossus (Necrotech)

Standing over thirty feet tall, this undead titan is composed of thousands of tiny chittering skeletons, knitted together into one enormous creature of bones and skulls by foul necromantic magic. As the towering colossus strides forward, the earth shakes beneath its feet.

Necrotech Titans. Over sixty years ago, Sandor Greyskin, Master of the Necrophagi, created the first bone collective (see *Tome of Beasts*) in his laboratory in Darakhan, White City of the Ghouls. Fifty years later, the forbidden lore shared by the vampires has allowed the Necrophagi to develop a new, far larger type of bone collective.

Weapons of War. In his tome of deranged ramblings, Tomislav the Thrice-Flayed theorized how "posthumes"—the tiny skeletal creatures used to make up the bone collectives—might be gathered in even greater numbers to form bigger, stronger creatures. Magenthus Quickborn, current Master of the Necrophagi and a bone collective himself, set to work creating a bone colossus, an undead

creature big and powerful enough to serve as a rallying point for the ghoulish legions in battle. The first bone colossus was deployed in anger against the Electoral Kingdom of Krakova where it proved decisive in bringing the siege of Wallenberg to a rapid and favorable conclusion for the undead armies. More bone colossuses are under construction; an enthusiastic Emperor Nicoforus intends to position the huge creatures at the vanguard of each of his imperial legions.

BONE COLOSSUS

Gargantuan undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 247 (15d20 + 90)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	11 (+0)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +11, Wis +8

Skills Intimidation +10, Perception +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

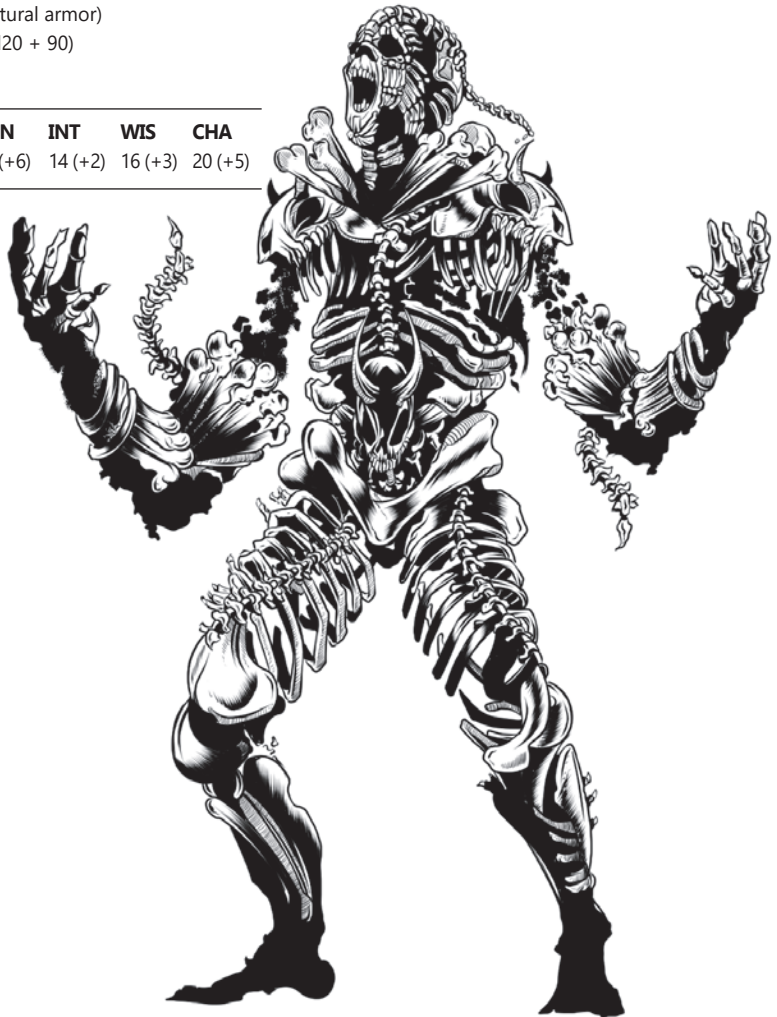
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Darakhul

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Hive Mind. All elements of the bone colossus within 50 miles of their main body constantly communicate with each other. If one is aware



of a particular danger, they all are. Any bone colossus with at least 40 hit points forms a hive mind, giving it an Intelligence of 14. Below this hit point threshold, it becomes mindless (Intelligence 0). At 0 hp, a few surviving sets of bones scatter, and the Necrophagi must spend months creating a new bone colossus.

Siege Monster. The bone colossus deals double damage to objects and structures.

Swarm Form. A bone colossus can use its action to split into four individual swarms of tiny bone posthumes. Each swarm is Large, has one quarter of the colossus's current hit points, and attacks and moves independently. A bone swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through openings at least 1 foot wide. As an action, the swarms can reform into a single bone colossus as long as they are adjacent to one another.

Turn Resistance. The bone colossus has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Colossus Form Only). The bone colossus makes two thunderous slam attacks.

Thunderous Slam (Colossus Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) thunder damage, and the target must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Razor Teeth (Swarm Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 21 (4d6 + 7) piercing damage.

Dispersal (Swarm Form Only). Each swarm separates further into dozens of individual posthumes, which scatter in different directions. Attacking the posthumes is ineffectual; the bone colossus is effectively removed from play while it is dispersed. The bone colossus must spend at least 1 minute fully dispersed before it can reform as an action. After dispersing, it must reform as a single bone colossus within 60 feet of its prior location.

Vent Linnorm

The immense reptile soars menacingly through the water—long and sleek, powerful tail undulating rhythmically, threatening all in its terrifying wake.

Terrors of the Deep. Vent linnorms live near hydrothermal fissures located in the deepest parts of the ocean. When they are not hunting, they can be found basking in their lairs, enjoying the dark, warm waters of their homes. They spend much of their time hunting in the lightless depths of the ocean. They are proficient hunters whose diet includes all varieties of sharks and whales, giant squid, dragon turtles, dragon eels, and younger sea dragons. While they are generally solitary creatures, mated pairs sometimes team up to hunt ancient sea dragons and kraken before resuming their solitary lives.

Primeval Dragons. Many sages believe that linnorms are precursors to modern dragons. Like their more evolved kin, vent linnorms enjoy amassing hoards of treasure they bury in the silty floor of their lairs. Younger linnorms spend much of their time searching through the wreckage of sunken vessels, while older ones actively sink passing ships, eating the sailors as they thrash in the water and picking up the fallen treasures at their leisure.

Aboleth Hunters. Due to the relative slow-wittedness of vent linnorms, aboleths are fond of dominating them for use as servants and war beasts. For their part, linnorms despise aboleths for enslaving them. A vent linnorm who becomes aware of the presence of aboleths immediately ceases its current activity and moves to destroy their hated enemies.

VENT LINNORM

Gargantuan dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 247 (15d20 + 90)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft., swim 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	14 (+2)	23 (+6)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +12, Dex +7, Con +11, Cha +8

Skills Intimidation +8, Perception +7, Survival +7

Damage Resistances fire

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision

120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Amphibious. The linnorm can breathe air and water.

Blood Sense. While in the water, the linnorm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to locate creatures that don't have all their hit points.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the linnorm fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

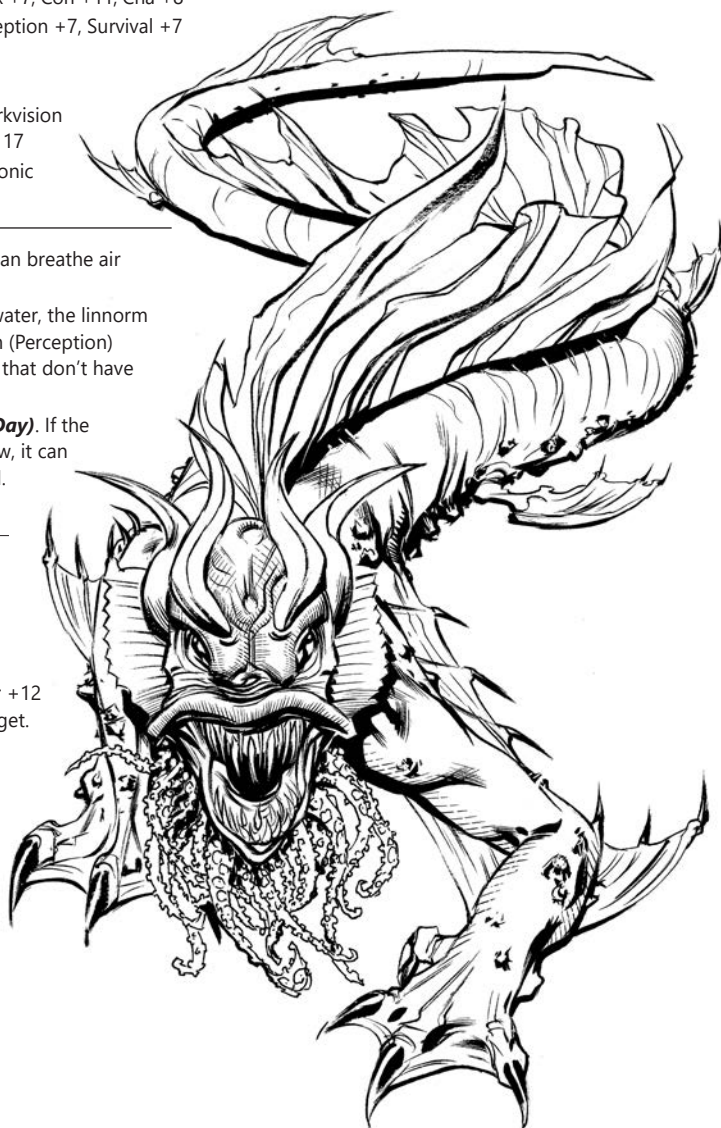
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The linnorm can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 23 (3d10 + 7) piercing damage and 11 (2d10) necrotic damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +12 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the linnorm can automatically hit the target with its tail. The linnorm can still make tail attacks against other targets and can use its tail to grapple up to three creatures at once.



Frightful Presence. Each creature of the linnorm's choice that is within 120 feet of the linnorm and aware of it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Inky Breath (Recharge 5–6). The linnorm exhales a cloud of briny ink in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 52 (15d6) necrotic damage and being blinded for 1 minute on a failed save or half as much damage and not suffering blindness on a successful one. A blinded creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

REACTIONS

Curse of the Deep. When the linnorm is killed, it unleashes a curse upon its killers. All creatures within 100 feet of the dead linnorm that dealt damage to it must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 1d6 levels of exhaustion or half that many levels of exhaustion on a successful save. A creature that failed the saving throw must remake the save each time it finishes a long rest in order to remove one level of exhaustion.

Bathael

The gigantic demon has the lower body of a maggot merged with a humanoid torso whose black flesh appears carved from stone. At the point where the two forms meet, it has a wide, slobbering maw with pink and white striped lips, serrated teeth, and a roaming puce tongue. The creature wears an iron helmet that conceals all but its three gleaming eyes.

Behind the Scenes. Once a dread lord of demons, Bathael was forced to flee from the Abyss after his subjects rose up against him. Since, he has installed himself in the sewers beneath Harkesh, working behind the scenes to make slaves of its people and use them

to spread chaos and ruin across the mortal world. Once he has reduced humanity to ruin, he will return to the Abyss and reclaim his stolen throne.

Dread Appearance. Most who deal with the demon never see his face or form, for Bathael prefers to keep to the gloom lest he terrorize his slaves.

BATHAEL

Huge fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 319 (22d12 + 176)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	10 (+0)	26 (+8)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Str +14, Dex +6, Con +14, Cha +12

Skills Deception +12, Perception +10

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

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

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., truesight 15 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Abyssal; telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Blasphemous Burbling. Foul blasphemies sound from Bathael's maw. When a creature that is not a demon starts its turn within 15 feet of Bathael and can hear the demon, the creature must succeed on a DC 20 Charisma saving throw or take 7 (2d6) psychic damage and become charmed for 1 minute or until it is no longer within 15 feet of Bathael. A creature that succeeds on this saving throw becomes immune to Bathael's blasphemous burbling for 24 hours.

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

Magic Weapons. Bathael's weapon attacks are magical.

Swift Curse (Recharge 5–6). Bathael uses Vile Curse as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bathael makes two attacks: one with his chain and one with his battleaxe.

Chain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is 10 feet or further from Bathael, the target must contest a Strength

check against Bathael's Strength check. If the target fails, Bathael drags the target up to 15 feet closer to itself and can make a bite attack as a bonus action.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) slashing damage.



Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (2d12 + 8) piercing damage.

Vile Curse. Bathael bestows a curse, chosen from the options presented below, on one creature it can see within 120 feet.

Blistering Curse. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or become cursed for 1 minute. While cursed in this way, the target takes 22 (4d10) acid damage at the start of each of its turns. If the target drops to 0 hit points or fewer from this damage, the target dies, and its flesh dissolves into a pool of jelly that dries 1d6 hours later. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Deafening Curse. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 45 (10d8) thunder damage and become cursed for 1 minute. While cursed in this way, the target is deafened and makes attack rolls with disadvantage. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Maddening Curse. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or suffer the effects of short-term madness 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.

Shadow of Death

Draped in black funerary garb, ribbons of which move of their own accord, the creature has the appearance of a skeletal angel.

Angels of Death. Once beings of light and beauty who championed justice across the planes, the shadows of death formed after some agent of entropy discarded their bodies into the Void. Their celestial forms protected them from ultimate annihilation, but their minds were forever darkened by the plane's dread influence. The shadows of death emerged from the darkness as death-obsessed agents of entropy.

Deathly Avatars. Shadows of death sometimes answer the call of death cults throughout Midgard. Rather than aid them though, they make them into their victims, killing them first before spreading the grave's shadow across the world. From their hatred of all life, they form obsidian blades, which they use to take the lives of anyone they encounter.

SHADOW OF DEATH

Large celestial, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 250 (20d10 + 140)

Speed 50 ft. fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	26 (+8)	24 (+7)	25 (+7)	25 (+7)	30 (+10)

Saving Throws Int +14, Wis +14, Cha +17

Skills Perception +14

Damage Vulnerability radiant

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

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

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages all; telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Death Throes. When the shadow of death dies, it explodes, and each creature within 30 feet of it or inside the area of its deathly shroud must make a DC 25 Constitution saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. The explosion destroys the shadow of death's *Blade of Unlight*.

Deathly Shroud (Recharge 6). As a bonus action, the shadow of death causes magical shadows to spill forth from a point it can reach, out to a 120-foot radius, turning all light in the area to dim light. The shadows suppress all forms of light, even that created by spells and other magical effects. The shadows remain for 1 hour or until the shadow of death is incapacitated.

At the start of each of the shadow of death's turns, each creature in the area of shadows other than itself, constructs, and undead must

succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage.

Destroyer of Life.

A creature reduced to 0 hit points from damage dealt by the shadow of death dies and can't be revived by any means short of a *wish* spell.

Magic Resistance. The shadow of death has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Shadow Leap. If the shadow of death is inside the area of its deathly shroud, it can magically teleport, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space it can see inside the area of its deathly shroud.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow of death makes three *Blade of Unlight* attacks. It can substitute Vision of Ending for two of these attacks.

Blade of Unlight. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) necrotic damage, and the target gains one level of exhaustion and must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or reduce its hit point maximum by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest.

Vision of Ending. Each creature that is not undead within 60 feet of the shadow of death that can see it must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom



saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened in this way, the creature is also paralyzed. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target also takes 35 (10d6) psychic damage. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this shadow of death's Vision of Ending for the next 24 hours.

Degmadu

A massive, fleshy polyp emerges from the ground, ringed with hundreds of wobbly eyes and filled with a whirlpool of stony, buzzsaw teeth. Tentacles burst from within this gaping maw like serpents ready to strike.

The Millennium Polyp. Degmadu the Shuddering Maw, or the Millennium Polyp, is a recurring terror in the subterranean kingdoms but rarely appears on the surface. It is said to grow more active on the surface every thousand years when it's ready to burst from its earthly confines into the sky to live a brief second life in a new form. This new life lasts only three days before it returns to the vaults of the earth for another millennium.

DEGMADU

Gargantuan monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 555 (30d20 + 240)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (+0)	27 (+8)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +18, Dex +8, Con +16, Int +13, Wis +14

Damage Immunities acid, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities frightened, paralyzed, prone

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages understands Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, and Primordial but can't speak; telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 27 (105,000 XP)

Earth Glide. Degmadu can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, Degmadu doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

Earthbound. Degmadu is confined to the earth and can't leave it. It can use Earth Glide to climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Siege Monster. Degmadu deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Degmadu makes one bite attack and four tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. Degmadu has thirteen tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 32 (4d10 + 10) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature grappled by Degmadu, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside Degmadu, and it takes 49 (14d6) acid damage at the start of each of Degmadu's turns.

If Degmadu takes 55 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, Degmadu must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of Degmadu. If Degmadu dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Resonance. Degmadu creates a sonic wave. Each creature within 120 feet of Degmadu and able to hear it must make a DC 24 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 27 (5d10) thunder damage and is deafened for 1 minute. On a success, the creature takes half the damage and isn't deafened.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Tentacle Attack. Degmadu makes one tentacle attack.

Resonance (Costs 2 Actions). Degmadu uses Resonance.

Sounding Sea (Costs 3 Actions). Degmadu creates a seismic disturbance that lasts until the end of its next turn. An intense tremor rips through the area, shaking creatures and

structures in contact with the ground within 60 feet of Degmadu. The ground in the area becomes difficult terrain, and each creature on the ground must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is knocked prone. Each creature on the ground that is concentrating must make a DC 24 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature's

concentration is broken. The tremor deals damage to structures, which might collapse and damage nearby creatures; this effect of Sounding Sea works like the *earthquake* spell, except the damage to the structures isn't doubled from Degmadu's Siege Monster trait.





ABOMINATIONS OF THE BLOOD KINGDOM

Three legendary creatures of ill repute from the Greater Duchy of Morgau, Doresh, and Krakovar.

by Christopher Lockey

The Blood Kingdom of Midgard is an accursed realm unlike any other, home to horrors both unspeakable and spectacular. The amalgamated lands of Morgau, Doresh, and Krakovar persist under the cruel reign of King Lucan, vampire lord of Bratislor. Meanwhile, the subterranean realms beneath these federated kingdoms serve as the dominion of Nicoforus the Pale and his Ghoul Imperium. A grim yet fortuitous alliance between these two despots has fueled a steady rise in the proliferation of powerful undead in the region, which has no doubt made the Blood Kingdom even more inhospitable for the weak of will and the faint of heart.

What follows is a macabre treatise on three unique monsters that reside within various corners of Midgard's Blood Kingdom (but who are also perfectly at home in any dark fantasy setting with a proper penchant for gothic horror and the phantasmagorical). Herein you will find examinations of the legendary creatures known as the Bloodstone Gargoyle of Bratislor Pass, Scythe Tail the Undying Wyvern, and the Heiderberg Horror. During your scrutiny of these abominable beasts, you may very well discover various customs of the Blood Kingdom themselves along with information on notable personages, local legends, and an enchanted item or two.

But hear you this and remember, whether questing across the bloodstained Field of Salesh or braving the boundless corners of your own mortal mind... tread carefully when walking among the dead, for the eyes of Lucan lurk in every shadow.

Horror in Roleplaying: Genre and the Blood Kingdom

Chances are you'll only take a trip to Midgard's Blood Kingdom if your gaming group enjoys a fair bit of horror in your shared roleplaying experience. If this is the case, you're in for a treat, for the Blood Kingdom is rife with dread. If you're relatively new to the horror genre or simply reluctant to taste of its forbidden fruits, then rest assured: a little fear in your storytelling makes the light-hearted fare taste oh so sweeter. But whether you're an experienced gore hound or a fledgling fear chaser, the Blood Kingdom beckons with open arms and eager fangs.

This material encourages you to embrace the darker side of your roleplaying, and it draws inspiration from a wide variety of grim and gothic tales—fitting with the dark fantasy surrounding the Midgard setting itself. Below ground, Nicoforus the Pale's ghoulish minions toil for a grim future in which the Midgard

they inhabit is less governed by the sun-loving nations of the surface. (If this means allegiance to Lucan and his bloodthirsty kin, then so be it.) In the realms above, an evil army of vampires has expanded from the seclusion of their mountain keeps, establishing one of the largest and most powerful dominions in the known world. The existence of the Blood Kingdom establishes a new normal.

Adventures in Morgau, Doresh, and Krakovar (as well as the caverns beneath) can be as convention-laden or as free of tropes

as you'd like them to be. But don't be afraid to lean on trope because a genre as nuanced as horror demands a certain amount of discipline to feel authentic and sincere, and this discipline is informed at every turn by the generations of horror storytellers that came before—how they innovated and what we can learn from them—stretching all the way back to the campfires of time immemorial. Study your favorites, and bring what they teach you to the table.



Rumors and Legends

Extensive travel through Midgard is bound to stir up some chatter about the Blood Kingdom and the peculiar horrors that haunt its tortured landscapes. Furthermore, passing through a border town or investigating local legends could reveal all sorts of details. Roll a d12 or choose from the following list of rumors to determine what kind of information characters might discover:

-
- 1 Merchants traveling south from Bratislor along the Great Northern Road talk of a haunted mountain pass that calls lonely travelers to their dooms.

 - 2 Traders who ferry along the River Brocken speak of a foul wind that stirs off the western banks of the river near Lengrove.

 - 3 Pirates of the Nieder Straights whisper tales of a doomed ship that was savaged by a strange form of vampiric plague it picked up near Heiderbirg.

 - 4 Dozens of pale infants in the lands surrounding Morgau and Doresh are being born with an irregular, triangle-shaped birthmark—a blemish that resembles a map of Bratislor Pass.

 - 5 On the day preceding each full moonrise, the northern waters of the River Yoshtula run red with blood.

 - 6 Trees of the Siarka Swamp bleed a loathsome crimson sap.

 - 7 One in nineteen horses birthed in the Blood Kingdom are born pale and gaunt but harbor strange supernatural gifts.

 - 8 The sacking of Heiderbirg has angered the ancient Wolfmark gods; as a result, the skies above the marshes west of Heiderbirg are wracked by weird storms.

 - 9 A temple to Marena south of Bratislor trains its Red Sister devotees to supplicate themselves to strange earthen idols.

 - 10 The winged beasts and feral ghouls of the Cloudwall Mountains worship an elder wyvern god.

 - 11 Children who die under a new or full moon are cursed and must serve the Red Goddess and her minions in the afterlife.

 - 12 Earthquakes in the Great Necropolis have begun waking strange horrors from the shadowy depths of the earth.
-

Fearful Omens

With the advent of the alliance between King Lucan and Nicoforus the Pale, the confederated Blood Kingdoms have ushered in a new era of prosperity for evil means and the monsters who perpetuate them. In the days and nights since Lucan's grim treaty has come to pass, the denizens of the foul lands between Dornig and Niemheim have grown increasingly aware of their rising station. And this supernatural momentum is almost tangible. After all, the Ghost Knights of Lucan's army couldn't have stormed the northern coasts of the Wolfmark without darakhul warriors in their midst, and the ghouls of the Imperium can only expand so far without the aid of their surface-dwelling brethren. More than a mere political current, this is the movement of a society—an entire undead civilization—whose motivations are predominantly questionable, if not altogether evil. The psychic, supernatural, and metaphysical maelstrom this has wrought is one of epic proportions.

One result of this confluence is the ongoing emergence of new and otherwise long-dormant creatures of legend. There are entities who prefer to skulk furtively in the shadows, and there are those whose reputations precede them like the doom winds of a plague storm. The Blood Kingdom is the sum of its parts: the essence of every abominable horror that crawls within the lands of Morgau, Doresh, Krakovar, and the realms beneath. And they are ultimately defined by the denizens who defend (and expand) their shared borders.

We're all familiar with the mythological trappings of the classic vampire lair: coffins draped in cobwebs in silent dungeons, creatures of the night prowling misty moorlands full of foreboding shadows. By its very nature, a nation full of vampires betrays some of the mystery and pageantry of the vampire myth (as defined in the current

and previous editions of the game). Since vampires of the Blood Kingdom occupy a more "normal" place in society, it falls on the abnormal to take up their traditional roles. The emergence of Midgard's abominations has often been preceded by calamitous events that herald their arrival, like storms, plagues, famines, or fires. How the abominations contained herein manifest themselves in your campaign is entirely up to you.

Dramatis Personae

Whether by accident or design, those who scour Midgard's forbidden realms are often fate-bound to find what they seek, and if one travels the Great Northern Road long enough, the sinister forces of supernatural evil are never far behind. Here now are three of the most notorious legendary creatures that reside within Midgard's Blood Kingdom along with descriptions of their lairs, regional effects, plot hooks, and more. If you're looking for more than a mere encounter, consider these unique monsters to be "minibosses" of your own campaign, and try to present them with the narrative pacing and dramatic gravitas a classic horror story deserves.

THE BLOODSTONE GARGOYLE OF BRATISLOR PASS

A hulking effigy carved from solid bloodstone clings to the sanctuary steeple. A closer look reveals a sinister winged creature of elemental earth that bears the loathsome likeness of a demonic statue with long, curving horns and a prodigiously wicked grin. The sound of grinding stone and the blinking of two luminous crimson eyes precede the gargoyle's lightning-swift assault.

Blood and Stone. Journeyed pathfinders and loyal servants of the Blood Goddess Marena know of a seldom-used mountain pass, south of Bratislor along the Great Northern Road, where a secluded monastery is situated in

grim isolation. Here, the Bloodstone Gargoyle of Bratislor Pass watches balefully over the crumbling walls of the Vermilion Abbey from atop its black granite steeple. A coterie of ghouls and vampire spawn occupy the abbey's lightless sanctuary, patiently awaiting the return of their Red Sister mistresses under the tireless guidance of their unholy sentinel.

Grim Sentinel. Born from a massive slab of chalcedony, the Bloodstone Gargoyle of Bratislor Pass gleefully serves the cruel interests of its sanguine masters and has watched over the Vermilion Abbey's mountain sanctuary for at least a century. The precise origin of this peculiar elemental menace remains a mystery, for none quite like it has ever been chronicled. Yet despite this surreptitious history (or perhaps because of it), the tale of the guardian has become a prized fable among Midgard storytellers with a fondness for horror.

Evil to the Core. An accursed gemstone known as the *heliotrope heart* is buried deep within the bloodstone gargoyle's stony chest. This magical orb can only be retrieved if the gargoyle is slain, at which point the rest of the earthen creature crumbles to dust. A scant few entities are even aware of the orb's existence, such as the Arch-Devil Parzelon, Midgard's most learned sages, and the Red Goddess Marena herself.

Elemental Nature. The bloodstone gargoyle doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

BLOODSTONE GARGOYLE

Large elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 72 (8d10 + 28)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

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

Damage Immunities poison

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Terran, understands Common but can't speak, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 5 (2,300 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bloodstone gargoyle makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the bloodstone gargoyle 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 the bloodstone gargoyle's control.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Fiendish Charm. The bloodstone gargoyle's eyes sparkle with crimson light as it targets one humanoid it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the bloodstone gargoyle, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed by the bloodstone gargoyle. The charmed target regards the bloodstone gargoyle as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the bloodstone gargoyle's control, it takes the gargoyle's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can, and it is a willing target for the gargoyle's bite attack.

Each time the gargoyle or the gargoyle's companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until the gargoyle is destroyed, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or takes a bonus action to end the effect.



LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The bloodstone gargoyle can take one legendary action, 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 bloodstone gargoyle regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The bloodstone gargoyle makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Hurl Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 40/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

THE BLOODSTONE GARGOYLE'S LAIR

The Bloodstone Gargoyle of Bratislor Pass serves as the sleepless sentinel of a crumbling mountain temple to the Blood Goddess Marena, where he perches upon an ebon steeple. Known as the Vermillion Abbey, this black granite edifice also houses a restless pack of ghouls and a small cadre of vampire spawn birthed from the gargoyle's sinister bite.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The craggy region surrounding the bloodstone gargoyle's lair in Bratislor Pass

has been corrupted by its unnatural presence, creating the following effects:

- There's a noticeable increase in the population of bats in the region.
- Plants within 1,000 feet of the lair are withered, and their stems and branches have become twisted and thorny.
- Shadows cast within 1,000 feet of the lair seem abnormally gaunt and sometimes move as though alive.

If the bloodstone gargoyle is destroyed, these effects end after 3d6 days.

BLOODSTONE GARGOYLE OF BRATISLOR PASS PLOT HOOKS

Characters could find themselves encountering the Bloodstone Gargoyle of Bratislor Pass for a variety of reasons:

- While traveling the Great Northern Road, the characters encounter the lone survivor of an ill-fated adventuring party. Two prodigious bite marks on the fellow's shoulder betray his encounter with the bloodstone gargoyle, which he describes in vivid detail before succumbing to his wounds. As he dies, he beseeches the characters to purify the unholy altars of the Vermillion Abbey by destroying them.

- A cabal of Red Sister acolytes has kidnapped the characters who find themselves imprisoned within the lightless dungeon of the Vermillion Abbey. If they manage to escape their blasphemous jail, will they survive the abbey's bloodstone sentinel and his retinue of undead minions?
- A powerful druid of Wendestal Forest tasks the characters with retrieving the *heliotrope heart* from the bloodstone gargoyle's earthen remains. In return, she promises to reward the characters with a magical boon (such as the spells *greater restoration*, *reincarnate*, or *scrying* in a time of need) and safe passage through the Wendestal.
- A blistering snowstorm drives the characters into the Bratislor Pass for shelter as they make their way north or south along the Great Northern Road. During their first rest, one of the characters—or perhaps a friendly scout in their midst—is beset by a trio of ghouls who drag the hapless victim toward the shadow-steeped threshold of the Vermillion Abbey.



HELIOTROPE HEART

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This polished orb of dark-green stone is latticed with pulsing crimson inclusions that resemble slowly dilating spatters of blood. While attuned to this orb, your hit point maximum is not affected by the necrotic damage of the bite of a vampire or vampire spawn. Additionally, while holding this orb, you can speak its command word as an action to cast false life as if it were cast using a spell slot of 2nd level; this property can't be used again until the next dusk.

Curse. This orb is cursed, a fact that is revealed only when an identify spell is cast on the orb or you attune to it. Attuning to the orb curses you until you are targeted by the remove curse spell or similar magic. As long as you remain cursed, you are unwilling to part with the orb, keeping it on your person at all times. While cursed, your shadow seems abnormally gaunt and sometimes moves of its own volition as though alive; as a result, you have disadvantage on Charisma (Performance) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks.



THE HEIDERBIRG HORROR

The pallid skin and beady red eyes of this corpulent ogre betray its undead nature, but the slavering, blood-soaked tissue between its gruesome bifurcated jaws suggests something more than mere vampirism. As the creature shambles forward, a ten-foot, toothed proboscis flicks forth from its gory maw. The undulation of a small rasping mouth on the tip of this monstrous tongue is almost as sickening as the smell of carrion rot that clings to it. But not quite.

Vile Origins. The Heiderbirg Horror is the hideous product of foul necromantic experimentation. Conceived as a weaponized form of vampirism, the horror was created by a mad Krakovan surgeon named Vol Vorigrad in the depths of his dingy Heiderbirg laboratory. After slaying its maker in a most brutal fashion, the horror escaped to the streets above and nimbly evaded the local commandery during a blood-soaked exodus through Heiderbirg's western gate. It has stalked the swamp-soaked village known as West Heiderbirg ever since.

Odious Methods. Vorigrad introduced a number of strange mutations and "upgrades" to his giantkin subject, including the curse of vampirism, a unique bloodborne pathogen, and the magically assisted graft of a grotesque, lamprey-like tongue. These alterations have made the Heiderbirg Horror a valuable yet unpredictable asset for those who would benefit from its chaotic brand of destruction.

Putrid Progeny. Like other vampires, the Heiderbirg Horror passes on the curse of vampirism to its victims. Vampire spawn created by the horror's distinct virulence carry the abomination's sludge blood disease themselves and are also capable of inflicting it upon others. As a result, the doom of West Heiderbirg owes nearly as much to sludge blood as it owes to the undead mutant itself.

Undead Nature. The Heiderbirg Horror doesn't require air.

THE HEIDERBIRG HORROR

Large undead (ogre mutant), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +3

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +3

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages understands Common and Giant but can't speak

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Regeneration. The horror regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the horror takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

Vampire Weaknesses. The horror has the following flaws:

Forbiddance. It can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Harmed by Running Water. It takes 20 acid damage when it ends its turn in running water.

Stake to the Heart. It is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into its heart while it is incapacitated in its resting place.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. It takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The horror makes two attacks, only one of which can be a toothed proboscis attack.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the horror can grapple the target (escape DC 15).

Toothed Proboscis. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the horror can't bite another target. If the



target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against disease or become infected with sludge blood until the disease is cured. Additionally, the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the horror 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 Heiderbirg vampire spawn under the Heiderbirg Horror's control.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Heiderbirg Horror can take one legendary action, 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 horror regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Charge. The horror moves up to its speed.

Vomit Blood. The horror spews a noxious jet of blood from its bloated gut. Each creature in a 15-foot cone must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this way, a target takes 5

(1d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Additionally, each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against disease or become infected with sludge blood until the disease is cured.

THE HEIDERBIRG HORROR'S LAIR

The Heiderbirg Horror stalks the swamp-soaked ruins of a doomed village west of Heiderbirg where its insatiable appetite subsides on any warm-blooded creatures it can find. The stagnant waters of this rural marsh surrounding “West Heiderbirg” are quite hospitable to the horror, whose malevolent essence has obscured the very sun itself with a penumbral blanket.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region surrounding the Heiderbirg Horror’s boggy lair has been corrupted by the creature’s unnatural presence:

- There’s a noticeable increase in the region’s rat, snake, and leech populations.
- Plants within 1,000 feet of the lair are rotted; their stems and branches are covered in black knots and festering wounds.
- Stagnant water within 1,000 feet of the lair is covered in a cloudy layer of scum that sometimes roils and moves as though alive.
- A storm cloud clings to the sky within 1,000 feet of the horror’s lair where sheet lightning and moaning winds herald intermittent downpours.

If the Heiderbirg Horror is destroyed, these effects end after 2d6 days.



NEW DISEASE: SLUDGE BLOOD

Sludge blood is a peculiar illness that originates from the Heiderbirg Horror’s putrid bite and noxious blood. It is sometimes transmitted by the horror’s vampiric spawn and the vermin that dwell within its marshy lair.

When a humanoid creature is bitten by a carrier of the disease or otherwise exposed, the creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become infected.

It takes 1d3 hours for sludge blood’s symptoms to manifest in an infected creature. Symptoms include lethargy, contusions, and darkened veins. The infected creature gains vulnerability to necrotic and poison damage and to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it regains only half the normal number of hit points from finishing a long rest.

At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. The creature recovers from the disease following three successful saves. On each failed save, the creature’s Dexterity decreases by 1d4 points. If Dexterity loss reduces the infected creature’s Dexterity below

1, the creature dies. A humanoid slain in this way rises the following night as a Heiderbirg vampire spawn under the Heiderbirg Horror’s control.

Variant: Heiderbirg Vampire Spawn

A casualty of the Heiderbirg Horror’s bite attack or of the deadly effects of sludge blood can be reanimate as a variant vampire spawn. Heiderbirg vampire spawn are considered CR 6 monsters and gain the following attack:

Diseased Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target’s hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the vampire 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. Additionally, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against disease or contract sludge blood until is cured.

HEIDERBIRG HORROR PLOT HOOKS

Characters could find themselves encountering the Heiderbirg Horror for a variety of reasons:

- A few citizens of the village west of Heiderbirg have survived the horror's onslaught by hiding in the swamp-soaked basements and moldy attics of their ramshackle dwellings. Desperate to escape but too timid to leave, they remain fearfully out of sight and wait for salvation as they slowly starve to death. One of these villagers—a malnourished teen named Kóri Myrrström—has made his safe exodus out of the West Heiderbirg swamp and beseeches the party for aid.
- An infamous Bemmean warlock named Yorick Lesch desires a sample of the Heiderbirg Horror's vital fluids for his own perverse experiments and will pay the characters handsomely if they can retrieve a liter or more of the creature's noxious blood.
- Wandering vampire spawn who carry the noxious disease known as sludge blood have taken up residence along the mouth of the Yoshtula River. The scattered clans of Wolfmark barbarians who roam these lands are eager to remove the vampiric pestilence from their shores and welcome any outlanders who would take arms against the invasive undead and help locate the source of their profane origin.
- An upstart lieutenant from the Order of the Bloody Blade at Heiderbirg Castle views the Heiderbirg Horror as a valuable asset in the war against Lucan's enemies. This obstinate dhampir noble—a warrior named Saoirse Khet—is keen on capturing the abomination for study in her dungeon far beneath Heiderbirg. She offers the characters generous rewards from her enchanted armory in return for successful exfiltration and enslavement of the legendary creature.

SCYTHE TAIL, THE UNDYING WYVERN

Cobwebs and mold cover the decrepit scales of this hulking undead wyvern who sits menacingly upon a scattered mound of rotting bones. The tip of its razor-sharp stinger drips a noxious black poison upon the skeletal heap, and its milk-white eyes pierce the darkness in hungry anticipation. As the undead wyvern shifts atop its makeshift throne, you spy the hilt of a colorful blade protruding from the creature's left shoulder.

Grim Hunter. In life, the wyvern Scythe Tail was the scourge of the Lengrove hinterlands. After a short-lived death, it now presides as a tyrant of the caverns below. Its once-leathery wings, now gaunt and thin as parchment, help it patrol the subterranean sprawl beneath the Cloudwall Mountains with ease. And the poison stinger at the tip of the undead wyvern's eponymous tail has become a foul perversion of its original form—a blade-like barb that injects a deadly necrotic venom.

Cruel and Conniving. Scythe Tail's transformation was the result of potent darakhul necromancy, but the covenant between the undying wyvern and his ghoulish creators is tenuous at best. The alliance between Scythe Tail and the ghouls of the Great Necropolis has served their mutual interests for nearly a century, but while the ghouls continue to benefit from the terrifying presence of their immortal warden, the undead wyvern itself has grown increasingly restless. Scythe Tail hungers for more than the wealth of wayward outlanders and carefully plots a dreadful ascension from the depths of its fetid subterranean lair.

The Hexen Blade. An adamantite short sword known as the *hexen blade* has remained curiously lodged above Scythe Tail's right shoulder following a long-forgotten foray with the weapon's previous owner. This magic sword grants its wielder the ability to master certain uncanny illusions and would make a prized addition to any enchanted armory.

Despite the hexen blade's modest renown, none who have set out to claim it have returned from the wyvern's lair alive. One certainly wonders what other treasures have heaped themselves upon Scythe Tail's hide or hoard since.

Undead Nature. Scythe Tail doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

SCYTHE TAIL, THE UNDYING WYVERN

Large undead (wyvern), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Skills Perception +5

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Common and Darakhul but can't speak

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If Scythe Tail fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Scythe Tail makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its stinger. While flying, it can use its claws in place of one other attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage. The target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature who suffers necrotic damage from this attack becomes poisoned until the start of Scythe Tail's next turn.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Scythe Tail 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. Scythe Tail regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. Scythe Tail makes a Wisdom (Perception) check with advantage.

Melee Attack. Scythe Tail makes one melee attack.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Scythe Tail fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 80 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Scythe Tail's Frightening Gaze for the next 24 hours.

HEXEN BLADE

Weapon (shortsword), rare (requires attunement)

The colorful surface of this sleek adamantine shortsword exhibits a perpetually shifting, iridescent sheen.

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

This magic weapon has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action and expend 1 charge to cast *disguise self*, *hypnotic pattern*, or *mirror image* (save DC 15).

The sword regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.



Scythe Tail's Lair

The Undying Wyvern occupies a shadow-haunted cave within the Lengrove hinterlands where he presides over a cold subterranean lake from atop a nest of timeworn bones. A bizarre species of pallid, carnivorous fish patrols the rimy lake. Opposite the cavern's twisting eastern entrance, tunnels spider out mazelike from the central cave toward the lightless depths of the Great Necropolis and beyond.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The cavernous region surrounding Scythe Tail's lair has been corrupted by the creature's unnatural presence, creating the following effects:

- There's a noticeable increase in the populations of bats, scorpions, and snakes in the region.
- Plants will not grow within 500 feet of the lair, and any vegetation that once grew here has long been replaced by moldy fungal rot.



-
- A creeping mist clings to the ground within 500 feet of Scythe Tail's lair. The mist occasionally takes eerie forms, such as grasping talons and writhing serpents.
 - Undead within 500 feet of the lair have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

If Scythe Tail is destroyed, these effects end after 2d10 days.

SCYTHE TAIL PLOT HOOKS

Characters could find themselves encountering the undying wyvern for a variety of reasons:

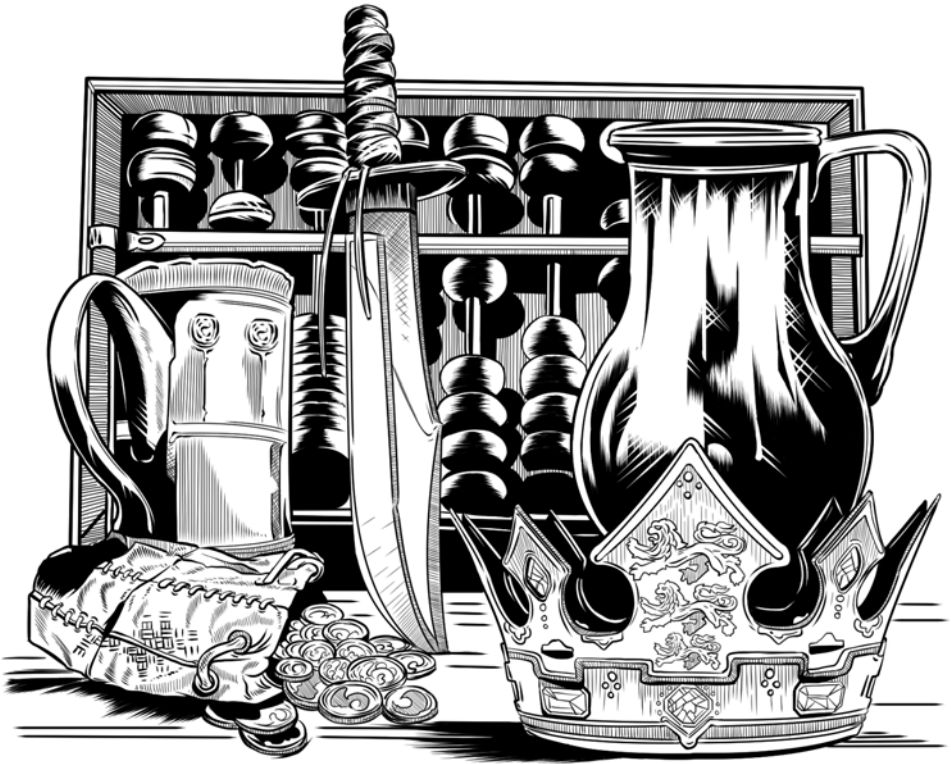
- A headstrong descendant of the *hexen blade*'s gnomish creator seeks to retrieve the magical shortsword to honor his family and gain favor with various lords of Niemheim. This perilous quest requires a dauntless group of explorers, and the characters are no doubt precisely the party for the job.
- Scythe Tail has grown increasingly ornery over time, and his once-fruitful symbiosis with the ghouls and other renegades of the Great Necropolis has been compromised by his feral nature. A coalition of devious Fretlock merchants and their patrons have pooled their resources to hire a group of sellswords to slay the beast or rout him out of the Lengrove hinterlands.
- In a perverse attempt to intimidate her darakhul allies, a contentious vampire baroness of Lengrove wants to mount Scythe Tail's head above her mantle. She is willing to pay the characters a handsome reward of 1,000 gp if they can deliver the undying wyvern's skull intact.

- The characters have been incarcerated by darakhul slavers within the Great Necropolis below Lengrove. After successfully liberating themselves from a nefarious Necropolis prison known as Skarhold, the only thing between the characters and the surface world is the carefully guarded chamber of Scythe Tail—who is eager to eviscerate any interlopers who cross its path.

Other Abominations of the Blood Kingdoms

The Bloodstone Gargoyle, the Heiderbirg Horror, and Scythe Tail are not the only abominations of Midgard's Blood Kingdom. Scores of various legendary creatures are rumored to exist in the outlying lands of Morgau, Doresh, and Krakovar—including the Spawn Mother of Salesh, the Demon Bat of Castle Bruvik, and the Lurker of Lodezig, among others. And there most certainly *are* others.

What unknown evils prowl the blood-soaked lands between Dornig and Niemheim? And what new atrocities will the unholy alliance of Lucan and Nicoforus yield? A world of remarkable horrors lies waiting to be found. Will Midgard's would-be heroes and villains be mighty enough to survive them? Only time and your fiendish imagination will tell...



NPC's



THE BAND OF THE TWICE DAMNED

Six infamous outriders in the service of King Lucan and Emperor Nicoforus the Pale.

by Christopher Lockey

The following serves as a grim dossier, detailing six unique non-player characters (NPCs) who prowl the shadow-haunted realms of Midgard's Blood Kingdom. These villainous outriders are united by their allegiance to a sinister mercenary company known as the Band of the Twice Damned, a cruel and cunning cadre of elite vampire spawn and other denizens of the night led by the undead warrior Vilém Erzov.

If you're a stranger to the Midgard setting, the Band of the Twice Damned can find a home in your own game world with the slightest modicum of effort. Rest assured, these horrific, headstrong characters belong anywhere they roam.

Sealing Encounters with the Twice Damned

The characters and creatures that comprise the ranks of the Band of the Twice Damned feature challenge ratings between 2 and 6, so gamemasters (GMs) should find them readily accessible for encounters throughout low- to mid-level campaigns. But that doesn't mean the Twice Damned can't give higher-level characters a run for their money as well.

You may find it difficult to scale these NPCs to 1st-level encounters without sacrificing many of the traits and abilities that make them unique, but you should run into very little trouble in your attempts to scale them upward for higher-level adventures. A few extra hit dice, a handful of minions, and a couple of interesting magic items can go a long way when it comes to balancing your encounters.

Dramatis Personae

Below are the members of the Band of the Twice Damned.

HAVRAN KREV, THE HARLEQUIN

An alabaster mask hides the face of this enigmatic fellow clad in a hooded black robe. The mask is a stark combination of features: a manic smile on the left gives way to a grotesque frown on the right. The fellow removes the mask to reveal the wily countenance of a middle-aged man. His eyes burn with unsettling anticipation, and he cackles senselessly as his hands trace arcane symbols in the air.

Tenebrous Altars. This Krakovan rogue-turned-warlock is the wild card of the group. One of the few humans under Vilém Erzov's command, Havran Krev is almost as

bloodthirsty as his vampiric brethren. Yet instead of satiating his own appetites, Havran kills for the entropic glory of his otherworldly patron: a mask of the Great Old One Nyarlathotep known as the Crawling Chaos.

Unlikely Allies. As the highest-ranking human mercenary in the Band of the Twice Damned, Havran is exceptionally poised for duplicitous interactions with Midgard's less sinister peoples. Whenever Sister Radana Nohc is unable to broker parley or pacify the weak, the Twice Damned call upon Havran to dispense his peculiar brand of civility. In tandem with Havran's allegiance to the Crawling Chaos, this has made for some interesting (and often aberrant) allies throughout the band's sordid history.



HAVRAN KREV

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Darakhul, Elvish, telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of his turns, Havran can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Dark Devotion. Havran has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Innate Spellcasting. Havran's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *mage armor* (self only)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Havran deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 ft. of an ally of his who isn't incapacitated and Havran doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Spellcasting. Havran is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has two 2nd-level spell slots, which he regains after finishing a short or long rest, and he knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *eldritch blast*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *true strike*

1st level: *dissonant whispers*, *hideous laughter*

2nd level: *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *phantasmal force*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Havran makes two melee attacks.

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

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

HAVRAN KREV'S PERSONALITY TRAITS

Ideal. "Only the gods that were can tell."

Bond. "Servitude is just a means to an end."

Flaw. "My body is not my own, for there are greater gifts than these."

OLD BRIMSTONE, THE BLACKSMITH

The smell of forge fire clings to this aged derro soldier, who wears a strange set of ebony goggles upon his ashen face. He throws down a pair of battered tongs, produces a massive silver warhammer from behind his back, and charges headlong into battle with a guttural roar.

From the Depths. Nicknamed "Old Brimstone" by his compatriots, this insane derro blacksmith hones his craft in service to the Twice Damned. From the forge to the field of battle, his prowess with hammers is unparalleled, and though he thoroughly enjoys tossing a hammer or two, Old Brimstone is most satisfied when swinging his trademark silver warhammer.

Forge Madness. Old Brimstone's backstory is a mystery to his allies, partly due to the mélange of insanities that riddle his dark dwarven mind. In addition to his delusions of grandeur and an array of auditory hallucinations, Old Brimstone mutters constantly to himself in Deep Speech—a habit that raises the suspicions of even the diehard killers of the Band of the Twice Damned.

OLD BRIMSTONE

Small humanoid (derro), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint mail)

Hit Points 64 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4

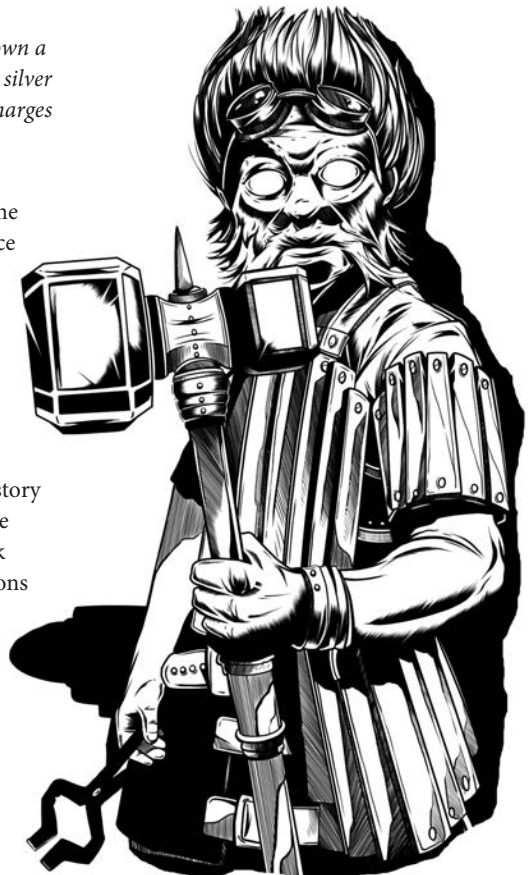
Skills Arcana +2, Athletics +5, Perception +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Dwarvish, Undercommon

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Eldritch Resilience. Old Brimstone has advantage on Constitution saving throws against spells.



Insanity. Old Brimstone has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Old Brimstone has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight unless he is wearing his *goggles of shade*.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Old Brimstone makes two melee attacks with his warhammer or two ranged attacks with light hammers.

Two-Handed Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

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

Light Hammer. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Field Repair (3/Day). Old Brimstone can use his action to temporarily improve the quality of one weapon or one piece of armor he can touch. Until the end of the encounter, an improved weapon receives a +1 bonus to damage rolls and a repaired piece of armor receives a +1 bonus to AC. A weapon or piece of armor can only be improved this way once, and the temporary improvement ends immediately following the final turn of combat.

OLD BRIMSTONE'S PERSONALITY TRAITS

Ideal. "A life of battle is a life well lived."

Bond. "I was born to craft blades for the world's most powerful armies."

Flaw. "Perfect is never good enough."

SISTER RADANA NOHC, THE CHAPLAIN

A lithe, garnet-eyed woman in crimson robes surveys the battlefield with cold calculation before raising a strange silver censer above her head. As incense wafts away from the orb, the air around her darkens with supernatural shadow. She raises her head in gleeful mockery before the gloom obscures her sultry form, and all that remains is her cruel laugh.

Sanguine Sister. This dhampir cleric of the Blood Goddess Marena is a valuable member of Vilém Erzov's crew whose delicate demeanor obscures her deadly nature. Although Erzov trusts her completely, Radana's true fealty remains with her coven of Red Sisters at Cantri Abbey—who have instructed her to ride with the Band of the Twice Damned so that she can monitor (and report) their ongoing activities.

Umbral Sentinel. Sister Radana's dhampir heritage is well-suited for her assignment to Erzov's vampiric warband. Not only are her divine magics a potent asset on the battlefield, she is unhindered by the sunlight that so righteously assaults many of her allies. When they must travel overland during sunlight hours, the Twice Damned operate under the protections of Sister Radana Nohc and her censer of dark shadows.



GOGGLES OF SHADE

Wondrous item, uncommon

While wearing these dark lenses, you have advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks. If you have sunlight sensitivity, wearing these goggles negates the disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight when you, the target of your attack, or whatever you are trying to perceive is in direct sunlight.

SISTER RADANA NOHC

Medium undead (dhampir), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (leather)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13(+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +3, Deception +5, Medicine +7, Persuasion +5, Religion +3, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances necrotic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Darakhul

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Spellcasting. Radana is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, guiding bolt, shield of faith*

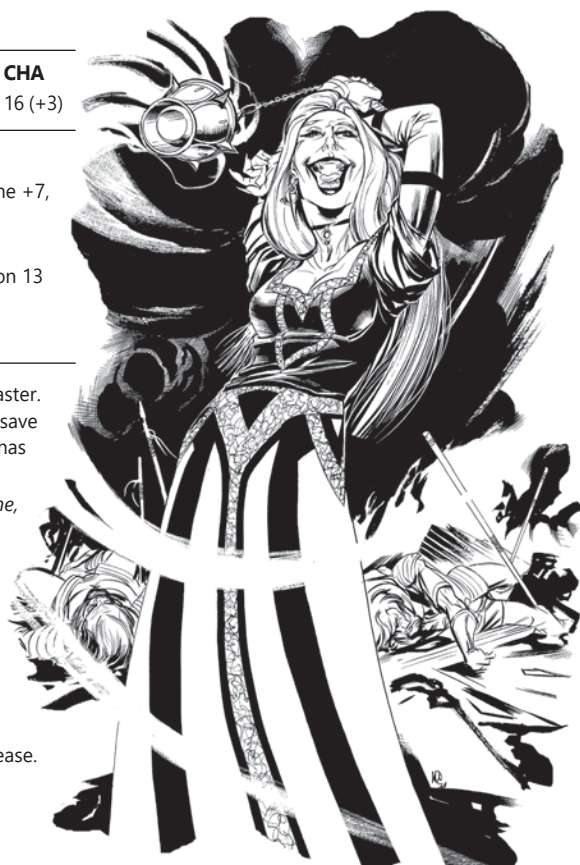
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (2 slots): *animate dead, dispel magic*

Undead Resistance. Radana has advantage on saving throws against disease.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Radana makes two rapier or two shortbow attacks. She can make a grapple attack or Dark Thirst attack in place of any attack.



CENSER OF DARK SHADOWS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This enchanted censer paints the air with magical, smoky shadow. While you hold it, you can use an action to speak its command word to conjure a 30-foot-radius sphere of magical shadow for 1 hour. Bright light and sunlight within this area is reduced to dim light, and dim light within this area is reduced to darkness. The shadow spreads around corners, and nonmagical light can't illuminate this shadow.

The shadow emanates from the censer and moves with it. Completely enveloping the censer within another sealed object, such as a lidded pot or a leather bag, blocks the shadow. If any of this effect's area overlaps with an area of light created by a spell of 2nd level or lower, the spell that created the light is dispelled. Once this ability of the censer is used three times, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Dark Thirst. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature that is grappled by Radana, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage. Radana regains hp equal to the amount of necrotic damage dealt.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Censer of Dark Shadows (3/Day). Radana conjures a 30-foot-radius sphere of magical shadow for 1 hour. Bright light and sunlight within this area is reduced to dim light, and dim light within this area is reduced to darkness. The shadow spreads around corners, and nonmagical light can't illuminate it. The shadow emanates from the censer and moves with it. Completely enveloping the censer within another sealed object, such as a lidded pot or a leather bag, blocks the shadow. If any of this effect's area overlaps with an area of light created by a spell of 2nd level or lower, the spell that created the light is dispelled.

Predatory Charm. Radana magically beguiles the mind of one humanoid she can see within 30 feet for 1 hour. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw, or Radana has advantage on Charisma checks against the target. If Radana or any of her allies damage the target, the effect ends. If the target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends, the target is immune to Radana's Predatory Charm for the next 24 hours. A creature immune to being charmed is immune to this effect. Radana can have only one target affected by her Predatory Charm at a time. If she uses her Predatory Charm on another target, the effect on the previous target ends.

Radana Nohc's Personality Traits

Ideal. "Ecstasy through pain."

Bond. "All things are possible with the blessings of the Red Goddess."

Flaw. "I have little respect for anyone who does not show fealty to Marena's will."

VARRATIR V'AL, THE HUNTER

A slate-skinned elven archer emerges from the shadows with uncanny grace. Two wicked horns—like the subtly curved antlers of an impala—protrude from beneath the folds of the fellow's long silver mane, which is pulled back into a handsome topknot. As the shadow fey ranger takes aim, a wolf made of dusk itself darts out from behind him and quickly closes in.

Unseelie Emissary. This callous shadow fey hunter is the scourge of northern woodlands and serves as the dutiful and demented scout of Erzov's terrifying troupe of vampiric villains. With the benefit of Varratir's expert orienteering, the Band of the Twice Damned navigate the shadow roads (both known and unknown) that weave their umbral way through the Blood Kingdom's unholy hinterlands with preternatural ease.

A Tooth for a Tooth. Varratir is allied with a special undead animal companion—the hateful lupine shade named Forathas. The origin of Varratir's strange symbiosis with spectral beasts is a mystery but is no doubt connected to his shadow fey ancestry. With



FORATHAS, THE LUPINE SHADE

Varratir V'al is closely linked to a lupine shade named Forathas, which serves as the shadow fey ranger's companion. Forathas is a lupine shade with an AC of 14, 30 hit points, and an additional +2 proficiency bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Forathas obeys Varratir's commands as best it can and takes its turn on Varratir's initiative. Varratir can use a bonus action to verbally command Forathas to take the Attack, Dash, Disengage, Dodge, or Help action. If Varratir is incapacitated, absent, or doesn't issue a command, the lupine shade acts on its own.

or without the combat support of their Blood Kingdom comrades, Varratir and Forathas make an extremely formidable team and are nigh inseparable.

VARRATIR V'AL

Medium humanoid (shadow fey elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 54 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11(+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +4, Cha +4

Skills Arcana +2, Perception +4, Stealth +8, Survival +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish, Umbral

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Colossus Slayer. When Varratir hits a creature with a weapon attack, the creature takes an extra 1d8 damage if it's below its hit point maximum. Varratir can deal this extra damage only once per turn.

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

Innate Spellcasting. Varratir's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. He can cast the following spell innately, requiring no material components:

1/day: *misty step* (when in shadows, dim light, or darkness only)

Spellcasting. Varratir is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +4 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud*, *hunter's mark*, *longstrider*

2nd level (2 slots): *pass without trace*

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

Steel Will. Varratir has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Traveler in Darkness. Varratir has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks made to know about shadow roads and shadow magic spells or items.

Undead Companion. Varratir can use a bonus action to verbally command the lupine shade Forathas to take the Attack, Dash, Disengage, Dodge, or Help action. If Forathas dies, Varratir can obtain a new companion by spending 8 hours magically bonding with a lupine shade that isn't hostile to him.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Varratir makes two shortsword or shortbow attacks.

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



Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Varratir V'al's Personality Traits

Ideal. "The hunt is the greatest thrill."

Bond. "Show respect to the shadow roads and the dark ways lest ye be taken by them."

Flaw. "Others need me *much* more than I need them."

VILÉM ERZOV, THE COMMANDER

A pallid yet imposing warrior clad in blackened mithral plate mail sits atop a pale undead warhorse draped in rusted barding. This rugged, long-haired mercenary—whose yellow eyes and semi-translucent skin betray his vampiric nature—flashes a cruel smile to reveal two prodigious fangs before raising a bloodstained lance from his side. He seems thirsty. And prepared.

Grim Allegiances. Vilém Erzov is the spawn of a powerful vampire lord of ill repute: Commander Baleneus of Cantri Abbey. Instead of servitude to Lucan's Ghost Knights however, Erzov sought to continue his life as a freebooting mercenary. As the self-appointed leader of the Twice Damned, he commands his cutthroat band of macabre mercenaries with an iron fist and ill will.

Accursed Methods. Erzov is a cunning tactician and a skilled fighter who exploits every advantage and opportunity on the battlefield he can find. Not only has Erzov surrounded himself with some of the fiercest cutthroats in Midgard, he's begun to amass a small collection of arcane curiosities that will no doubt help the tides of fate flow in his favor: among these are his accursed sanguine lance, his mithral armor, and his grim destrier.

Undead Nature. Vilém Erzov doesn't require air.

VILÉM ERZOV

Medium undead (vampire spawn), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (mithral plate mail)

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +4

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Abyssal, Common, Darakhul

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Brave. Vilém has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.



SANGUINE LANCE

Magic weapon (lance), uncommon (requires attunement)

This fiendish lance runs red with blood. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

Whenever you hit a target with this lance, the target takes an additional 1d6 necrotic damage, and you regain hit points equal to half the amount of necrotic damage dealt. The extra damage lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Curse. This lance is cursed, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. Each day, as long as you remain cursed, you have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws until you draw blood from another creature with the lance. Once the lance has done damage to another creature or its surface has contacted the blood of another creature, this effect of the curse is negated until the next dawn.

Regeneration. Vilém regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn if he has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If he takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn.

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

Vampire Weaknesses. Vilém has the following flaws:

Forbiddance. He can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Harmed by Running Water.

He takes 20 acid damage when he ends his turn in running water.

Stake to the Heart. He is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into his heart while he is incapacitated in his resting place.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. He takes 20 radiant damage when he starts his turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, he has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.



ACTIONS

Multiattack. Vilém makes two melee attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature or a creature that is grappled by Vilém, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Vilém 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.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, Vilém can grapple the target (escape DC 13).

Longsword +1. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) magical slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, Vilém can utter a special command or warning whenever a non-hostile creature that he can see within 30 feet of him makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand Vilém. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if Vilém is incapacitated.

Sanguine Lance. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Vilém 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.

REACTIONS

Parry. Vilém adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, he must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Vilém Erzov's Personality Traits

Ideal. "Who dares, wins."

Bond. "I'll never forget the immortal power my vampire lord has given me."

Flaw. "I have little respect for anyone who is not a soldier."

ŽRAVIKA, THE MANGLER

A tangled mane of black hair obscures the feminine face of this imposing vampire spawn. A feral ferocity is evident in the bloodstains on her shredded garments and by her curious blood-soaked arsenal: a chain that dangles menacingly at her side, its far end fused to a rusty hunting trap. She lurches forward with a hiss, dragging the hefty iron trap along the ground before winding up the chain for a toss.

Hook and Pull. Žravika utilizes a crude and brutal arsenal to capture and savage her victims, including her supernaturally gifted claws and fangs as well as a bear trap hooked to a 20-foot chain. She almost *prefers* to snare her victims with the trap instead of her bare hands if only for the distress it seeps into their doomed and frantic souls. As Žravika is fond of saying, "Terror makes the blood taste sweet."

Unholy Hunger. Žravika is nicknamed "the Mangler" by her allies because of the blood frenzy that drives her chaotic style of combat. It is a rare circumstance that a victim of Žravika's is left whole enough to re-animate, and she is quite often drenched in blood after feeding. This untamed approach to battle is an effective one however—that is, when Žravika's ruthless appetites don't spook the quarry or needlessly hurry the chase.

Undead Nature. Žravika doesn't require air.

ŽRAVIKA

Medium undead (vampire spawn), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (12d8 + 56)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Darakhul

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Blood Frenzy. Žravika has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Regeneration. Žravika regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn if she 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.

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

Vampire Weaknesses. Žravika has the following flaws:

Forbiddance. She can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Harmed by Running Water. She takes 20 acid damage when she ends her turn in running water.

Stake to the Heart. She is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into her heart while she is incapacitated in her resting place.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. She takes 20 radiant damage when she starts her turn in sunlight.

While in sunlight, she has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Žravika makes two melee attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature or a creature that is grappled by Žravika, incapacitated, or restrained.
Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 7

(2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Žravika 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.

Claws. *Melee Weapon*
Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, Žravika can grapple the target (escape DC 14).

Bear Trap Bola. *Ranged Weapon*
Attack: +5 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage plus the target is grappled (escape DC 13).

Žravika's Personality Traits

Ideal. "The greatest pleasures are derived from inflicting pain."

Bond. "I thirst for the glory of the master."

Flaw. "All living creatures are cattle and should be treated as such."



Encounters with the Band of the Twice Damned

Whether presented as allies or enemies, there are many ways characters could come into contact with Vilém Erzov's Band of the Twice Damned. Here are a few scenarios (both within and outside the Blood Kingdom) that could draw the party into a conflict or confrontation:

- The characters are soldiers in King Lucan's army, training among the lower

ranks of the Ghost Knights of Morgau. As part of their training, Commander Baleneus of Cantri Abbey has ordered the party to meet up with the Band of the Twice Damned outside of Heiderbirg. Here, they will collectively plan an assault against several barbarian tribes of the Wolfmark that have risen up against their vampiric invaders. Once the uprising has been adequately stamped out, the characters are promoted in rank by

Commander Baleneus who stations them near Cantri Abbey for a new campaign alongside the Red Sisters.

- A wealthy merchant from the Free City of Jozht hires the characters to disprove a despicable rumor: that his offspring—a brash cleric of Thor named Magni Magnason—has not only fallen in battle against the dread armies of King Lucan but has been re-animated to serve their abyssal ranks in damnable perpetuity. With the name and last known location of the Band of the Twice Damned as his only leads, the elder Magnason offers the party a handsome fee to find his boy and either bring him home or put him out of his undead misery.
- The characters are all residents of a Blood Kingdom border town (such as Skogarholm, Lingenau, or the Obertal Freehold) that is sacked by the Band of the Twice Damned and allied soldiers in Lucan's army. Instead of slaughter, the party members face a life of servitude to the Twice Damned. How they survive is entirely up to them.

Other Warbands of the Blood Kingdoms

The Band of the Twice Damned aren't the only outriders operating throughout the wilds of Morgau, Doresh, and Krakovar. The Blood Kingdom—and the lightless realms beneath—are home to many undead warbands who serve one lord or another (if not many at the same time).

THE FELL RIDERS

This group of ghoulish mercenaries stationed near Lengrove is known for the foul, winged mounts that carry its woeful warriors into battle (featuring creatures such as giant bats and skull drakes). An eccentric darakhul commander named Barron Sefton

Wurm leads this putrid horde from atop his nightgaunt steed (see *Creature Codex*). Increasing numbers of Fell Rider patrols have been seen outside the borders of the Blood Kingdom—a grim development that is alarming to many of the fair peoples of greater Midgard, to say the least.

ROT COMPANY

The soldiers of Rot Company are comprised of a legion of zombies and skeletons led by a triumvirate of masked necromancer overlords—referred to simply as the Three. Rot Company continues a slow and perpetual march across the Blood Kingdom from their Necropolis headquarters south of Bratislor, returning to the capital at least once a year to celebrate their spoils. Massive skeletal beasts are said to support their numbers, along with the divine aid of an unholy relic of Vardesain known as the *Crucible of the Hunger God*.

New Creatures

Amidst their legions of lesser minions, the armies of King Lucan and Nicoforus the Pale are often reinforced by special undead animal companions. The grim destrier and the lupine shade are but two of these creatures. Larger warbands of the Blood Kingdom have been known to boast a wide array of exotic undead beasts and uniquely horrifying entities, all of which serve to frighten their enemies as much as bolster their ranks.

GRIM DESTRIER

A grim destrier is an undead warhorse bred utilizing the loathsome magic of powerful necromancers. These dreadful steeds are immune to the effects of exhaustion and will tirelessly serve any riders both brave and malevolent enough to mount them.

Undead Nature. A grim destrier doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.



GRIM DESTRIER

Large undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (breastplate barding)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Abyssal and Common but can't speak them

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the grim destrier moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits with its hooves on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the destrier can make another attack against it with its hooves as a bonus action.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the grim destrier to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 5 + damage taken) unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the grim destrier drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 5 (2d4) necrotic damage.

LUPINE SHADE

Lupine shades are undead beasts resembling dark exaggerations of wolf shadows. Like shadows and shrouds, lupine shades hunger for the vitality of living creatures but are particularly drawn to those unpolluted by the taint of evil. Long tied to the unseelie courts of the shadow fey, these wolfish creatures also make exceptional minions for undead and necromantic masters.

Undead Nature. A lupine shade doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

LUPINE SHADE

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 30 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

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

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands Common and Umbral but can't speak them

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amorphous. The lupine shade can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The lupine shade has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

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

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

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the lupine shade has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

ACTIONS

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a shadow or a shroud (50% chance; see *Tome of Beasts*) rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

WOTAN'S WARRIORS

by Hannah Rose

*“Forth from craggy peaks they strode,
Their blades bright-shined and razor-honed.
Before them lay a dangerous road,
With enemies both far and near.
With sword and shield, with axe and spear,
They fought with valor and gained song-fame.*

*Wisdom they sought, knowledge earned dear,
A raven’s whisper in the All Father’s ear.
Though no one knows from whence they came,
The tale is told from fane to fane,
Of Warriors who honor Wotan’s name.”*
—from the *Scrolls of the Raven Father*

Wotan’s Warriors are a small band of dwarven reavers who came together to form a highly mobile, elite squad in the name of Wotan, the All Father. Rumors of the squad’s purpose are many and varied—some say that Wotan’s Warriors were assembled to gather information on the Mother of Madness and her worshippers while others swear that their sole purpose is to quietly dispatch enemies of Wotan with deadly force. Whatever their assignments, they are known throughout the Northlands as skilled fighters, clever strategists, and connoisseurs of fine ale.

Wotan’s Warriors report directly to Brökk Kolisen, the high priest of Wotan. However, there are whispers among Wotan’s faithful that they may have gone rogue, breaking ties with the official organization of warpriests. Brökk Kolisen is a human, though raised among dwarves and generally considered a dwarf by bond if not blood, so rumormongers speculate that the Warriors resented being commanded by a non-dwarf and refused to take orders from Brökk.

The Warriors were last seen somewhere near the Gloaming Crag, where they are reportedly hunting a mighty frost giant known as Coldmaw.

Torven the Runekeeper

Unusually for a dwarf, Torven uses no family or clan name, though he is clearly a native of the Northlands. Before the Warriors were assembled, Torven was a priest at Wotan’s shrine in Stannasgard, and he is often called the Runekeeper for his mastery of rune magic. Torven is the unofficial leader of Wotan’s Warriors, and his grey-streaked hair and watchful eyes give him the appearance of a stern but kindly father.

Torven is slow to anger and slow to forgive. Those who inspire his wrath are sure to feel the full might of Wotan’s Warriors, an experience that few have survived. He values loyalty, fairness, and justice and abhors petty tyranny, cowardice, and greed.

Relationships. Torven and Greta are the most experienced members of the group, and he follows Greta's lead in matters of battle strategy and tactics. He privately thinks of Almaro and Bronwyn as the children he never had. Torven trusts Gunther, but it bothers him that Gunther won't share the details of his past—if Gunther has old enemies, then the group should be prepared for whatever might come their way.



TORVEN THE RUNEKEEPER

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +7, Cha +3

Skills History +3, Insight +7, Religion +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Dwarven Resilience. Torven has advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage.

Runekeeper's Blessing. Torven knows the runes dagaz, gebu, ingwaz, and mannaz (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*). The blessing of Wotan allows him to trace the ingwaz rune using one action, rather than the usual 2 rounds.

Spellcasting. Torven is an 8th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *bless the dead**, *guidance*, *mending*, *sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *deep breath**, *guiding bolt*, *longstrider*, *shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *blade of wrath**, *lesser restoration*, *see invisibility*, *spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *call lightning*, *fear*, *glyph of warding*, *revivify*

4th level (2 slots): *divination*, *faithful hound*, *inspiring speech**

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Torven makes two attacks with his spear.

Divine Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage and 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

Ingwaz. Torven traces the ingwaz rune upon the face of a willing creature. That creature gains the benefits of a barbarian's Rage feature as though it were an 8th-level barbarian.

Greta Whitecrag

Greta is the master strategist of the group. The others rely on her knowledge of battle tactics, monsters, and ancient Northlands customs. Greta spent years fighting giants, trolls, and wolves, and she has a personal animosity toward trollkin and werewolves.

Greta values honor, knowledge of the old ways, and freedom. She is loyal to a fault and will make it her personal mission to hunt down traitors, spies, and deserters that threaten the safety of her people. Sturdy and stout, she wears unadorned plate armor and coils her long silvery braids beneath her helmet.

Relationships. Greta is a stern and uncompromising warrior, but Almaro and Bronwyn are the most likely to earn her rare smiles, though she and Torven enjoy swapping tales—or boasts—over mugs of ale. Greta is especially stern and dour when it comes to Gunther, but her reticence stems from a

reluctance to confront the details of their relationship, which has begun to progress beyond that of fellow warriors.

GRETA WHITECRAG

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral good

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +5

Skills Athletics +7, History +4, Religion +4

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Bulwark. Greta has advantage on saving throws against being knocked prone or moved from her current space.

Dwarven Resilience. Greta has advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage.

Wotan's Champion. Greta's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. On a critical hit, she also deals an additional 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Greta makes two attacks with her battleaxe or javelins.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Javelin. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shield Bash. Greta can use a bonus action to slam a creature within 5 feet of her with her shield. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or fall prone.

Almaro Merecrest

With an impressive, intricately braided beard and piercingly bright eyes, Almaro Merecrest stands at three feet, ten inches—small for a dwarf—but Almaro is in fact no dwarf.

Almaro is a halfling who wears a *belt of dwarvenkind*, passing himself off as a dwarf thanks to his fluent Dwarvish, knowledge of dwarven customs, and—of course—his magnificent beard.

Almaro loves a good ale, a game of dice, and a spot of gossip, but he's always quiet when it comes to his own history. Only his companions in Wotan's Warriors know of his true identity as a halfling from a small farm somewhere near Zobeck, one of six brothers and sisters.

Wotan's creeds demand honor in battle, but despite his talent for subterfuge, Almaro is as true a follower of Wotan as any priest. "I am no coward, nor am I a fool," he says. "I am a warrior wise enough to use the gifts I am given."

Relationships. Almaro's trust is hard-earned, but the Warriors have been through enough together to trust each other with their lives—and at least some of their secrets. He deeply respects Torven but is often tempted to challenge his authority. Although Greta and Almaro have completely different fighting styles, they are frequent sparring partners, taunting and ribbing each other good-naturedly. Bronwyn and Almaro get along well enough as long as Bronwyn refrains from making jokes about his stature. Gunther is a mystery to him, and the question of their origin bothers Almaro so much so that he has begun discreet investigations into the matter of Gunther's family and home.

ALMARO MERECEST

Small humanoid (halfling), neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Int +3

Skills Deception +8, Perception +3, Persuasion +5, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Halfling, Thieves' cant

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Belt of Dwarvenkind. Almaro has advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage. He also has advantage on Charisma checks made to interact with dwarves.

Brave. Almaro has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Evasion. If Almaro is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if he fails.

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

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Almaro deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage 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 of his that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Theft of Knowledge (2/day). When a creature that Almaro can see casts a spell, he can force it to make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the spell functions as normal. On a

failure, the creature's spell fails and has no effect, and it can't cast the same spell again until it completes a short or long rest.

Gunther Skjaldhammer

Gunther Skjaldhammer's past is a mystery. As far as anyone knows, they simply walked out of the mountains and straight into Wotan's shrine in Stannasgard. There is no Skjaldhammer clan or ancestral hall, so presumably it is a name that Gunther picked for himself. Those who tell tales of Wotan's

Warriors describe Gunther as a middle-aged dwarf clad in mismatched hides, bearing a staff with a raven perched on the top.

Gunther's deepest secret is that even they don't remember their past. Sometimes they wonder if they were always a dwarf or if they were a raven that Wotan transformed into a dwarf for the god's own purposes. They find peace and meaning in their relationship with the natural world and fight fiercely to defend the other Warriors, their family in all but name.



Relationships. Gunther hasn't told the others of their missing memories for lack of trust—it's simply that they want to be the first to discover the secrets of their past before sharing it with others. They admire Torven's leadership, Bronwyn's boldness, and Almaro's cleverness. Gunther has developed romantic feelings for Greta but is unsure of Greta's feelings for them.

GUNTHER SKJALDHAMMER

Medium humanoid (dwarf), lawful good

Armor Class 12 (16 with barkskin)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +7

Skills Nature +3, Perception +7, Survival +7

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Druidic, Dwarvish

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Dwarven Resilience. Gunther has advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage.

Runic Familiar. Gunther can cast *find familiar* as a ritual to summon a rune raven ally. Unlike other familiars, the rune raven can attack as normal.

Spellcasting. Gunther is an 8th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). They have the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, hearth charm**, *thunderwave, wolfsong**

2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin, hold person, pass without trace, snowblind stare**

3rd level (3 slots): *freezing fog**, *meld into stone, protection from energy, sleet storm*

4th level (2 slots): *hallucinatory terrain, ice storm, locate creature*

ACTIONS

Runestaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. When a creature that is concentrating on a spell takes damage from this weapon, it has disadvantage on the saving throw it makes to maintain its concentration.

Change Shape (2/day). Gunther magically assumes the shape of a beast with a challenge rating of 2 or less and can remain in this form for up to 4 hours. Gunther chooses whether their equipment falls to the ground, merges into their new form, or is worn by the new form. Gunther reverts to their normal form if they fall unconscious, drop to 0 hit points, or die. Gunther can revert to their normal form using a bonus action on their turn.

While in a new form, Gunther uses the game statistics of the beast (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) but retains their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores as well as their skill and saving throw proficiencies. They can't cast spells, but they can continue concentrating on a spell they have already cast and take actions that are part of a spell they have already cast.

RUNE RAVEN

Tiny celestial, lawful neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)

Speed 10ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages understands Celestial, Common, and Dwarvish but can't speak them

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Flyby. The rune raven doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Mimicry. The rune raven can mimic any sounds it has heard, including voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell that they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The rune makes two attacks, one with its beak and one with its talons.

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

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

REACTIONS

Croak of Doom (Recharge 5–6). When a creature within 30 feet of the rune raven that it can see makes a saving throw, the rune raven can use its reaction to impose disadvantage on that saving throw.

Bronwyn Brawnstein

With shining copper hair and ruddy cheeks, Bronwyn Brawnstein is the picture of a fair dwarven maiden, though she knows bawdy songs that would shock even the most grizzled reaver veterans. Despite her mysterious occupation, she maintains a close relationship with her family; Wotan's Warriors are frequent guests at the Brawnstein clan hall.

Bronwyn loves a good joke, but her calling lies in creating epic poems, sagas that carry ancient magic in their words. Many of the rumors about Wotan's Warriors were started by Bronwyn to spread confusion and obfuscate the truth of their missions.

Relationships. Bronwyn finds Almaro's posturing annoying at times but enjoys his wit and ability to spin a tale as fine as any skald. Her irrepressible cheer and determination have seen the entire group through many a battle and many a blizzard.

BRONWYN BRAWNSTEIN

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral good

Armor Class 17 (half plate)

Hit Points 117 (18d8 + 36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +3, Performance +7, Persuasion +7, Religion +3

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Giant

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Dwarven Resilience. Bronwyn has advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance to poison damage.

Spellcasting. Bronwyn is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following bard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mending, message, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, comprehend languages, heroism, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *heat metal, shatter, unluck on that*, Wotan's rede**

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, fear, hero's steel*, nondetection, tongues*

4th level (2 slots): *confusion, freedom of movement, polymorph*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bronwyn makes two attacks with her warhammer.

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Scorn of the Skald (4/day). When Bronwyn hits a creature with a weapon attack on her turn, she can deliver a short, mocking verse. If the creature can hear her, it must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or take 14 (4d6) psychic damage. On a failure, the creature also has disadvantage on all attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.

* Spells marked with an asterisk are from *Midgard Heroes Handbook*.



THAERN

Ghost on the Shadow Road

by Jon Sawatsky

Thaern at a Glance

Thaern is an elfmarked bard, traveling the shadow roads, offering help to the lost, and always spying for their patron, Ulorian the River King.

Background

Child of the Procession. Thaern spent their childhood at their mother's side while she served in the Procession of the Imperatrix as it wandered Dornig. The young elfmarked child learned the rules and etiquette of court in their early days—eventually joining their mother as a servant to the nobles. Even then, Thaern's considerable powers of persuasion and natural charisma gave them advantage over the other servants and eventually drew the attention of a member of the Lords Arcane.

Natural Spy. Taken as an apprentice into the Lords Arcane of Dornig, Thaern spent their late childhood and early teen years learning magic inside the semi-secret organization. Their instructors noted Thaern's affinity for persuading others and moving among crowds unnoticed. Thaern learned much from them, including several songs from the Summerland, whose lyrics had not been heard in Midgard for an age, and was steered toward the information-gathering branch of the Lords Arcane where the young spy first

met Somorin of the River Court on a mission in Bad Solitz.

Love Gained and Lost. The regal envoy of the River King, Somorin Fantharas, caught the eye of young Thaern, and the two quickly fell in love. For several years, the two maintained a relationship over distance, engaging in a competition to see who might send the most elaborately delivered letter. One day, after a drought of letters from their love, Thaern received a summons from the Court of the River King.

Audience with Ulorian. In their audience with King Ulorian, Thaern learned that Somorin had been assassinated in an ambush while traveling the shadow road to Corremel. In the watery court of the River King, a shadow grew over Thaern's heart. Capitalizing on Thaern's despair and anger, Ulorian wasted no time in offering the young bard a position as a spy against the Black Prince, who Ulorian suspected was the organizer of the ambush. The River King gave to Thaern some of his power through a handful of enchanted river stones.

Upon the Shadow Road. Today, Thaern wanders the shadow roads in hopes of uncovering the plans and ambitions of the Black Prince. Their magical power is bolstered by the River King but also by the rage and sadness the young bard keeps prisoner in

their heart. Ulorian knows that the spy works to further their own goals as much as his own, but this is of no concern to the king who is more than happy to receive Thaern's reports from Corremel.

Current Goal

Thaern seeks to gather information about the Black Prince and ultimately learn why Somorin was slain. The young bard trades in information and has the means to hire and negotiate with adventurers to work against the Black Prince.

Roleplaying Tips

Courtly. Thaern's speech is elevated, and they rarely curse. Despite their manner of speaking, Thaern is not shocked or offended by coarse and crude talk.

Conflicted. Thaern struggles to maintain their mood. Their past in the Court of the Imperatrix is at odds with the burning hatred and sadness they hold in their heart. These darker emotions rise unexpectedly, making Thaern an inconstant companion.

Spirited. Thaern is quite lively and charming in most interactions. A wry smile or sarcastic remark is no stranger to the bard.

Plot Hooks (Midgard)

Here are some ways to incorporate Thaern into your campaign:

- The party becomes lost while traveling one of the shadow roads. Thaern appears and offers to guide them to their destination but only if they agree to carry one of the magical river stones for several days. During this time, the party are attacked by shadow fey who see an opportunity to destroy one of the River King's scrying stones.
- Thaern seeks out the party based on reputation and offers them coin to

expunge shadow fey from a crumbled tower on a shadow road to Nuria.

Confronted, the shadow fey make a counteroffer for the party to take Thaern prisoner. In truth, a vril artifact lies in the ruined dungeon beneath the tower, and both Thaern and the agents of the Black Prince are looking to obtain it.

Adapting for Other Settings

Rather than the River King, Thaern is a mercenary spy available for hire to the highest bidder. They might work as an entertainer to cover their missions. Thaern's revenge-fueled motives make them unpredictable, possibly even working as a double agent.

THAERN

Thaern wears a voluminous black traveler's cloak lined with soft fur and trimmed in slate silk. The bard's rusty-brown hair is long and tied back with a leather thong. Their features are sharp, leaning heavily toward their elven heritage. Thaern's frame is slight, and their hazel eyes absorb the light in an unsettling manner.

Deceitful. Thaern is a trained liar. From their childhood navigating the social complexities of imperial courts to their current occupation as a spy, the bard knows how to manipulate others through deception and guile.

Rising Power. Thaern's arcane power has been increased through the magic of Ulorian and their knowledge of ancient elven songs. Thaern's magic has not yet reached its peak, and the young bard is always looking for opportunities to test their limits.

Master of the Shadow Roads. Thaern spends most of their time spying on the officials of Corremel. They know the secrets of the roads and are an excellent guide for those attempting to cross them. Rather than coin, Thaern trades information for safe passage on the shadow roads—whatever the bard knows, Ulorian knows as well.



THAERN

Medium human (elfmarked), neutral

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 56 (7d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +5, Performance +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Goblin, Halfling

Challenge 2

Grace of the River King (1/Day). As a bonus action, Thaern evokes the magic of the River King. For 1 hour, Thaern gains advantage on Dexterity saving throws. While this ability is active, Thaern does not take damage when falling from a height of thirty feet or less.

River Stones of Ulorian. Thaern is attuned to the river stones of Ulorian and may use their abilities.

Spellcasting. Thaern is a 4th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). They know the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *minor illusion, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *disguise self, guest of honor*, heroism, sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *enhance ability, invisibility, maddening whispers***

(*see *Deep Magic: High Elven Magic*; **see *Deep Magic: Void Magic*)

ACTIONS

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

Shadow Blind (3/Day). Thaern uses their action to create a band of magical darkness around the head (or heads) of one target creature they can see. That creature must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. After using this ability, Thaern may teleport to any unoccupied space within 15 ft.

SONGS OF THE SUMMERLAND

Thaern knows the season songs of the elves and plays them for the right price and audience. The bard rarely sings a song twice for the same creature.

Spring. This song starts quiet and slow—a new bud forming on a branch—but soon rises in pitch and tempo to celebrate nature's renewal. Willing listeners are cured of any diseases and have all levels of exhaustion removed.

Summer. The summer song is an anthem to the glory of the elves and their realm. Thaern's voice is stretched to its maximum in this polyphonic chorus of sheer joy. Willing listeners gain inspiration and temporary hit points equal to twice their proficiency bonus.

Fall. A contemplative song that stays in the low range, fading to a whisper in some verses. Thaern's voice is steady and strong, finishing with a lyrical tour of the Arbonesse before the great retreat. Willing listeners find

their minds calm, granting them one usage of Legendary Resistance. After 24 hours, this ability fades whether used or not.

Winter. A peaceful lullaby that induces rest and relaxation. Thaern's voice soothes like a cool, gentle wind through the evergreens. Willing listeners gain the benefits of a long rest, restoring all Hit Dice instead of the normal half.

RIVER STONES OF ULORIAN

Wondrous Item, very rare (requires attunement)

This magical silk pouch contains three river stones taken from the floor of the River King's court. The stones are opalescent, worn smooth by the silt and sand carried in the current of the river.

While attuned to this magical item, its bearer may use a bonus action to activate one of the following effects:

- A cloud of magical leaves erupts from the ground under one target creature you can see. The creature must succeed a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. This ability cannot be used again until you complete a long rest.
- Mist forms around you until the end of your next turn. While the mist is present, attacks against you gain disadvantage. This ability cannot be used again until you complete a long rest.
- A swift-flowing current of water appears at your feet. Your speed is doubled until the end of your next turn. While affected by this ability, you provoke no attacks of opportunity. This ability cannot be used again until you complete a long rest.



ZORANYA VELL

Sorcerous Mercenary Brawler

by Mike Welham

Zoranya Vell at a Glance

Zoranya Vell is a Septime mercenary who, while gifted with sorcerous power, relishes hand-to-hand combat. In that pursuit, she taught herself how to use her gifts to augment her battle prowess.

Background

Rough and Tumble Childhood. Zoranya is the fifth child of merchant parents who lived solely in the port city of Maragia. Smaller than other children her age, she quickly learned the value of training to defend herself from larger children, including her own elder siblings. She also realized there was no such thing as a fair fight, and any advantage she could gain was worth it to score a win. Though she never used her savvy in fights to bully other children, she made sure someone who started a fight with her had reason to reconsider such action in the future.

Lessons about Might. Zoranya's parents spent most of their time with their business, so they never kept tabs on their daughter. Otherwise, they would have tried to steer her away from her confrontational nature. Zoranya developed the view that her parents' gentle demeanor gave others an opening to take advantage of them. Giving proof to her

opinion, Valeran soldiers and sailors often took supplies from her parents' store without paying or severely underpaying, excusing it with the claim of wartime necessity. She decided to take matters into her own hands after one of these shakedowns and robbed the soldiers of the ill-gotten goods as well as the soldiers' wealth out of spite. Zoranya's pride about taking a stand was short-lived however as the soldiers had identified her and returned to destroy her parent's shop.

Burgeoning Sorcerer. Though her parents were able to restore their livelihood, Zoranya fled Maragia partially out of shame but mostly to avoid further retribution against her or her family. Furthermore, she figured she would fix the damage she unwittingly caused by earning money in one of the Seven Cities' mercenary companies. After bouncing from company to company, looking for a competent group with whom she could stake her future, she found Savoc's Marauders, led by self-styled Savoc the Quick. To ensure acceptance into the Marauders, she had to hold her own against the strongest member of the group. Zoranya's initial overconfidence changed to frustration as her opponent kept knocking her to the ground and gloating afterward. Intending to knock the man down at a moment when he was playing to the rest of the group and ignoring her, she gasped when flames spread

out from her outstretched hands, badly burning her opponent. Savoc, impressed with Zoranya's physical and magical skill and despite her injuring one of his company, invited her to join the group.

Growing Dissension. Zoranya's first year with Savoc's Marauders proved fruitful, allowing her to send gold to her parents. Though she reconciled with her parents and felt safe returning to Maragia, mercenary life suited her, so she remained with Savoc's company. However, the group's leader recently took several job endangering civilians over Zoranya's objections. She has spoken to some of her compatriots who agree with her assessment on the callousness of targeting noncombatants. Rather than leave to find a new group, she hopes to convince Savoc to change his attitude or to usurp him.

Current Goal

Zoranya's immediate goal is to eliminate Savoc and install herself as the mercenaries' leader. She also works to hone her ability to blend close combat with her magical power.

Roleplaying Tips

Sense of Honor. Zoranya is ruthless in combat and takes every advantage she can to win a fight. However, this only applies to opponents able to fight back. She rarely attacks those who seemingly can't defend themselves and often breaks from combat when her foes are obviously unable to continue the fight. She is keenly aware of the impact of her actions on innocent parties and tries to minimize it when possible.

Obsessive Follow-Through. Experience has taught Zoranya not to leave loose ends in a job. While she won't wantonly kill those who might retaliate against or report her, she takes measures to ensure she will be long gone before any retribution can strike.

Secretive. Zoranya never speaks about her past or divulges familial or romantic

entanglements. She welcomes revenge against her but refuses to drag lovers and family into feuds she initiates.

Plot Hooks (Midgard)

Here are some ways to incorporate Zoranya into your campaign:

- Zoranya has been recruiting additional combatants for an assault on a dragonborn column at the Rumelan border. She sizes up the party's capabilities by ambushing them and then relenting if they prove powerful enough or accepting their surrender and a small ransom if they prove unworthy. Depending on her assessment of the party's moral standing, she either directly asks them to kill Savoc or embellishes tales of his cruelty to set wheels in motion.
- Zoranya accepted a side gig to assassinate a minor Capleon noble at the Baron's Trade Fair. The party might be hired to help Zoranya with the job or to prevent her from carrying it out.

Adapting for Other Settings

Zoranya is a mercenary with an odd code of honor and can serve that role without the political involvement associated with the Seven Cities. She could operate as a free agent or as part of a mercenary team, either leading it or aspiring to assume leadership.

ZORANYA VELL

Zoranya, a woman with a deep tan complexion and shorn hair, wears leather armor, which protects her torso but leaves her muscular arms free. She has weapons strapped to her back and wears hand wraps, indicating that she is an accomplished hand-to-hand combatant.

Banterer. Zoranya enjoys fighting and makes it known to her opponents as she gives a lively rundown of combat. She is quick to



taunt her foes when they make mistakes, but she also demonstrates approval for well-executed attacks.

Melee First. Scrapping in the streets most of her young adult life led Zoranya to prefer her fists and weapons over magic. This, combined with her strange code of honor, causes her to eschew magic altogether in situations where she believes physical might alone is enough to win.

Self-Preserving. Zoranya fights with gusto, but she knows when she is overmatched. When attempting to escape, she uses defensive magic at her disposal or resorts to threats with powerful spells to persuade her foes to allow her to retreat. If she has allies, she feels remorse for abandoning them but tempers that with the delusion that they should know better to stay in an unwinnable fight.

ZORANYA VELL

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Athletics +4, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dwarvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Concentrate Area Spell. Zoranya can transform a spell with an area effect into one that targets a single creature. When she casts the spell, she makes a melee spell attack against the creature within her reach. On a hit, the target is affected by the spell and receives no saving throw.

Imbue Unarmed Strike. As a bonus action, Zoranya can empower her unarmed attacks with spell power. She can choose a cantrip, which adds 2d4 damage (her choice of either psychic damage or the damage type inflicted by the spell) to her unarmed attacks until the end of her turn. She can instead expend one of her spell slots, which adds 1d6 damage plus 1d6 damage per spell level (damage type chosen as above) to her unarmed attacks for a number of rounds equal to the spell level.

Spellcasting. Zoranya is a 5th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *poison spray*,

shocking grasp, GM's choice

1st level (4 slots): *burning hands*, *color spray*,
witch bolt, GM's choice

2nd level (3 slots): *shatter*, GM's choice

3rd level (2 slots): *lightning bolt*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Zoranya makes two attacks: two fist attacks or a fist attack and a melee weapon attack.

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

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

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage or 7 (1d10 + 2) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

ELEMENTAL WRAPS

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

You have resistance to your choice of acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage while wearing these hand wraps.

The wraps have 10 charges. While wearing them, you can use a bonus action to expend 1 or more of its charges to add 1d6 damage per charge to your unarmed attacks until the beginning of your next turn. The damage type is the same you choose for your resistance.

You can change your choice of the wraps' damage type after a short or long rest.

The wraps regain 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the wraps unravel and fall to the ground, which destroys the wraps.



CLOSE COMBAT CASTER (FEAT)

Prerequisite: Intelligence or Charisma 13 or higher

You have learned to focus your spells, so you can target creatures within reach. When you cast a spell that normally has an area of effect, you can instead make a melee spell attack against a target within your reach. On a hit, the target is affected by the spell and receives no saving throw.

Additionally, you no longer have disadvantage on a ranged spell attack roll if you are within 5 feet of a hostile creature that can see you and isn't incapacitated.

YANA HARR

Builder of Bridges

by Jon Sawatsky

Yana at a Glance

Yana is an ambitious and bright-hearted young bookbinder who is slowly being corrupted by an evil tome entitled *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*.

Background

Skilled Bookbinder. Yana spent her childhood learning the craft of bookbinding in Bemmea. By the time she was eleven, her skills rivaled that of her instructors who were at once impressed and jealous of her. She was given the opportunity to bind a new spellbook for an academy wizard who was struck by the girl's attention to detail. Within a few days, she was taken on by the wizard as an apprentice.

Dedicated Student. Though her arrival to the formal study of magic came late (she was twelve), Yana quickly caught up to and surpassed the other apprentices. Her concentration exceeded that of her peers, and she rarely left the crooked halls and cramped rooms of her academy. Yana's dedication to her studies eventually caught the attention of the Sons of Vael Turog who lured her away from her middling master to join them in the Librarium Caelmarath.

Bright-Hearted. For six years, her membership in the Sons of Vael Turog provided Yana the challenges she needed. While some of her peers were attracted to the power of the plagues conjured by the Caelmarathian mages, Yana found herself repulsed by them. It was through her study of plagues that Yana learned what was important to her: hope.

Chosen. In what would be her final year of study in the Librarium Caelmarath, an innocuous historical tome presented itself in a moldering pile of water-damaged manuscripts. Yana found it by chance as she walked by. Its pale-yellow cover, stained by water and time, displayed its title in faded golden script: *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*. The book detailed the construction of bridges in the ancient Caelmarathian cities. Detailed engineering drawings were annotated and accompanied by design notes and brief narratives of how successful the builds were. Despite its mundane subject, Yana found herself enthralled by the book—whose pages entered the young mage's dreams.

Wandering Sage. Yana abandoned her formal training and her studies at the Librarium Caelmarath shortly after discovering *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*. Her dreams led her to the Mage Road and into the old places of magical power nearby. In her

dreams, Yana unlocks great protective magic through the study of the tome and in the collection of magical artifacts. She is currently traveling the Mage Road in hopes of financing her first attempt at building one of the bridges detailed in the book.

Current Goal

Yana wants to acquire the funds and means to build the first bridge detailed in *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*. After gathering what she needs for the project, she must find a proper site for the bridge to be built.

Roleplaying Tips

Genuine. Yana rarely lies or misleads others. She is true to her word and is sincere in her desire to protect Allain. She genuinely believes building the bridges detailed in the book will bring hope to the world.

Awkward. Yana spent most of her teen years in seclusion in the Librarium Caelmarath. She lacks subtlety in her conversations and is easily flustered by situations requiring social skills.

Haunted. The dream incursions are having a cumulative effect on Yana. She stares into empty spaces, becomes distracted easily, and is often tired.



Plot Hooks (Midgard)

Here are some ways to incorporate Yana into your campaign:

- The party hears of a recently graduated academy mage from Bemmea looking to hire adventurers. Arriving at her camp near some Caelmarathian ruins, they meet Yana who offers them coin in exchange for exploring and making safe the old keep. Her dream visions have led her to this site, where she hopes to acquire a magical chunk of granite to serve as the foundation stone for the first bridge.
- While exploring ruins near Bemmea, the party discovers an injured Yana in some remote corner. She offers the party a magical item to help her escape the place. After the rescue, Yana invites the party to witness the completion of the first bridge along the Mage Road—an act they have unknowingly facilitated in aiding the mage.

Adapting for Other Settings

Rather than protecting her homeland, Yana is driven to build the bridges in hopes of increasing her own arcane power. Spurred on by the evil artifact she carries, the young wizard unknowingly moves the world toward danger as the portals formed by the bridges allow all manner of creatures to cross over. Under the cover of rebuilding ruins for the use of a noble lord, Yana works to enact the will of the book.

YANA HARR

Yana wears worn traveler's clothes and a faded blue Bemmean cowl and robe. She carries a quarterstaff topped with a small cluster of sapphires. She is of average build with curly brown hair cut close to the scalp.

Driven. Yana's natural ambition is amplified by the evil tome she carries with her. While she does not currently engage in outright evil acts, the influence of *The Bridges of Sot'Holon* may lead her to take extreme actions to ensure the bridges are built.

READING THE BRIDGES OF SOT'HOLON

- 1 The PC is overwhelmed by a sense of joy and knowledge that lasts for a day.
- 2 The PC is certain they are on the verge of a major breakthrough of some kind for 1 hour.
- 3 During their next long rest, the PC has a vivid dream of crossing a bridge of light.
- 4 The PC spends their next short rest drawing perfect arcs and spheres in the dirt or any nearby markable surface.
- 5 For 1 hour, the PC speaks with a heavy Caelmarathian accent.
- 6 The PC gains the ability to cast *mending* for 24 hours.

CROSSING A BRIDGE OF SOT'HOLON

- 1 Upon reaching the other side of the bridge, the party is sped along a shadow road to a random location in Midgard.
- 2 At the midway point of the bridge, the party is attacked by a hard encounter of devils. If they defeat them, they may pass into the hells, arriving in a random location.
- 3 Upon reaching the other side of the bridge, the party travels back in time to the beginning of the Great Mage Wars; turning around, the bridge is nowhere to be found.
- 4 Shortly after stepping onto the bridge, a portal to the slumbering Anax Apogeion (see *Midgard Worldbook*) opens on the other side.

Hopeful. At her core, Yana is a kind-hearted and hopeful person. She genuinely wants to protect the people of Allain and sincerely believes that studying *The Bridges of Sot'Holon* and manifesting them in the world furthers that aim.

YANA HARR

Medium human (humanoid), neutral good

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 64 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Gnomish, Halfling

Challenge 5

Bemmean Excellence. Whenever Yana rolls a 1 or 2 when making a spell attack, she may reroll that attack. She must use the second result.

Chosen of Sot'Holon (1/Day). Any attack, spell, or effect that reduces Yana to 0 hit points or less instead reduces her hit points to 1.

Spellcasting. Yana is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *cloak of shadow**, *guiding star**, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *bad timing***, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *Sot'Holon's formula* (see below), *wind wall*

4th level (2 slots): *confusion*, *polymorph*

(*see *Deep Magic: Illumination Magic*; **see *Deep Magic: Chaos Magic*)

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8 - 1) bludgeoning damage.

Curse of Sot'Holon's (1/Day). Yana chooses one creature she can see and fills its mind with the designs and formulas of Sot'Holon. That creature

must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn. Additionally, creatures who fail this saving throw have disadvantage on attack rolls made against Yana for 1 minute.

READING THE BRIDGES OF SOT'HOLON

Choose from the table below or roll randomly to determine what happens when a PC tries to read *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*.

CROSSING A BRIDGE OF SOT'HOLON

Choose from the table below or roll randomly to determine what happens if the party (or a PC) crosses a completed bridge of Sot'Holon.

SOT'HOLON'S FORMULA

3rd-level divination (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a copy of *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Drawing on the knowledge contained within *The Bridges of Sot'Holon*, you magically increase your powers of reasoning and deduction. You gain advantage on any Intelligence (Investigation) ability check for the duration of the spell. While concentrating on this spell, your spell attacks deal 7 (2d6) additional force damage.



The *Bridges of Sot'Holon* is an evil artifact created by a mad mage of fallen Caelmarath. On the surface, its pages appear to contain information on the building of stone and wood bridges; in truth, the book details diabolical rituals to bridge the mortal world with countless other dimensions. The book is sentient and communicates with its bearer via dreams. The book wants to be used and attempts to influence its bearer to do so; only a powerful arcane master can unlock the secret rituals contained within.

GALVANIX

Heart of the Storm

by Mike Welham

Galvanix at a Glance

Galvanix is a paper drake dragon mage, specializing in lightning magic, who uses herself as a spellbook. She is a war leader for the Mharoti Empire, excelling in skirmishes and battles requiring quick, decisive action.

Background

Humble Origins. Galvanix's parents served as scribes in Harkesh, and the young paper drake's intense curiosity allowed her to pick up her parents' trade quickly. Her parents assumed she would follow in their chosen profession and surpass them but worried about her desire to understand the reasoning behind the writs and orders being scribed. She also sought to expand her knowledge, focusing on spells and arcane secrets.

Bullied by Crimson Drakes. Galvanix's insatiable hunger for learning might not have been enough to change her life's trajectory, but her treatment by other drakes ultimately drove her down a different path. Her main tormenters were crimson drakes convinced of their superiority to the studious paper drake. The bullying drakes habitually intercepted Galvanix as she returned from a nearby library, threatening to burn her books and place the blame on the paper drake. They often singed her wings with their fire breath. As her ability to wield magic grew, she decided

to finally take a stand when one of the drakes made good on his threat to destroy a book she carried. The image of the turisaz rune burned brightly in her mind as she unleashed a fatal bolt of lightning on the bully.

Pilgrimage to the Northlands. Seeing the turisaz rune in her mind's eye and realizing the power it held, at least for her, Galvanix yearned to understand more about the rune and how she could control its power. Ostracism for killing one of her tormenters provided the impetus to leave Harkesh and travel to the Northlands where she hoped to study under practitioners of rune magic. Her search led her to Thunder Mountain where, after overcoming initial suspicion about her presence, she studied and grew in knowledge and power. She discovered an aptitude for combat and aided the residents in repelling and destroying giants.

Rising in the Ranks. After a decade in Thunder Mountain, Galvanix longed for a return to the Dragon Empire. Her magical might and combat prowess gave her confidence to return to the empire and assume a role as a soldier. Her analytical mind gave her insight into tactics that made her stand out among the rank-and-file soldiers. She proved adept at leading small groups in raids where a massive army would prove useless, culminating in the destruction of a cell of Rumelan dissenters. She currently leads a squadron of blitzkrieg units.



Current Goal

Galvanix feels constant pressure to prove the worth of her smaller army units, often at odds with dragons who believe an overwhelming force always wins battles. When she can, she continues her research into lightning-based spells and relics.

Roleplaying Tips

Inquisitive. Galvanix hungers for knowledge, especially regarding magic and magical techniques. She often shares information

and her own spells with creatures she should consider beneath her station, assuming the creatures possess wisdom previously unknown to her.

Pyrophobic. Though Galvanix is no more vulnerable to fire than most dragons, she fears it. She never casts a spell that deals fire damage and bristles when she sees others using fiery magic. When readying for battle, she ensures she has protection from that element.

Mercurial. A pleasant exchange of information can turn in an instant if someone conversing with Galvanix brings

up her childhood, questions her intellect, or broaches a topic from a seemingly random array. The drake crackles dangerously with lightning, threatening to unleash it upon the offender if they are not quick enough to apologize. If placated, she returns to a previous conversational thread as if nothing had happened.

Plot Hooks (Midgard)

Here are some ways to incorporate Galvanix into your campaign:

- The party discovers a minor artifact that harnesses the power of storms, allowing its owner to summon lightning and thunder. Galvanix learns about the party's treasure and seeks to acquire it: first by offering a sizeable sum and then by force if the party refuses her.
- Galvanix has heard of a spell capable of conjuring a powerful lightning storm hidden among ruins in the Southlands. Her duties as one of the empire's war mages prevent her from hunting for the spell. She offers a considerable reward to a group of adventurers to uncover the knowledge she seeks.

Adapting for Other Settings

In settings without a consolidated dragon empire, Galvanix has a vendetta against red dragons and other draconic creatures using fire, making her an odd ally against a powerful dragon. She might also be a reclusive hoarder of arcane power, parting with knowledge for equivalently powerful knowledge or dispatching minions to acquire more.

GALVANIX

Galvanix has the sharp edges and translucent skin common to paper drakes, but she has refashioned herself, so the outer edges of her wings look like lightning bolts. Arcane writing replete with turisaz runes cover her

skin. Electricity plays along every surface of the drake's body, and her eyes seem to contain miniature thunderstorms.

Living Spellbook. Galvanix has several additional folds of paper containing the spells she has studied and picked up in her travels. She can produce additional sheets of paper upon which she scribes new spells she learns or duplicates of spells she knows.

Eager Learner. The drake is aware she must constantly acquire new knowledge to fully achieve mastery of lightning. Though willing to take what she desires by force, she values negotiating for the information she seeks. In rare cases, she trades spell pages from her own papery flesh for new spells.

Ruthless Commander. Galvanix usually has a retinue of lesser dragons under her command. She shows no remorse about sacrificing them for strategic gains or to cover her escape.

GALVANIX

Small dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 92 (14d6 + 42)

Speed 40 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Skills Arcana +7

Damage Immunities lightning

Condition Immunities paralyzed, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Duplicate Spellbook Pages (1/Day). Galvanix can spend 1 hour to create a duplicate of the equivalent of one spell from her body. This inflicts 1d4 damage per spell level of the reproduced spell to the drake.

Refold (Recharge 5–6). Galvanix can fold her body into different sizes and shapes. She can adjust her size by one step in either direction but can't be smaller than Tiny or larger than Medium size. Changes in size or shape don't affect her stats.

Shelve. Galvanix can fold herself into a small, almost flat form, perfect for hiding on bookshelves. She can be recognized as something other than a book by someone who handles the ostensible book (doesn't just glance at it on the shelf) and makes a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Nature or Investigation) check. She can hop or fly (clumsily, by flapping her pages) 5 feet per turn in this form.

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

- Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*, *true strike*, GM's choice
1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *mage armor*, *thunderwave*, GM's choice
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *shatter*, GM's choice
3rd level (3 slots): *haste*, *lightning bolt*, GM's choice
4th level (3 slots): *lightning shield* (variant fire shield that inflicts lightning damage), *remove insulation* (see below), GM's choice
5th level (1 slot): *cloudkill*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Galvanix makes one bite attack, one claw attack, and one tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) lightning damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) lightning damage.

Tail (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) lightning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be incapacitated for 1 round.

Galvanix as a Spellbook

If Galvanix does not lose more than half her hit points from fire damage, her corpse becomes a viable spellbook. The first time a creature attempts to learn or copy a spell

from Galvanix, it is targeted with a 9th-level *remove insulation* spell (DC 15). Additionally, a creature affected by *remove insulation* (whether through the spellbook or another source) takes 4d8 lightning damage each round it is in contact with the book (no saving throw).

Galvanix contains the following spells: *blindness/deafness*, *chain lighting*, *chromatic orb*, *cloudkill*, *dancing lights*, *haste*, *lightning bolt*, *lightning shield*, *mage armor*, *mage hand*, *remove insulation* (see below), *shatter*, *shocking grasp*, *thunderwave*, and *true strike* (along with 6 spells of the GM's choice).

REMOVE INSULATION

4th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: 8 hours

You target a creature within range, and that creature must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw or become less resistant to lightning damage. A creature with immunity to lightning damage has advantage on this saving throw. On a failure, a creature with immunity to lightning damage instead has resistance to lightning damage for the spell's duration, and a creature with resistance to lightning damage loses its resistance for the duration. A creature without resistance to lightning damage that fails its saving throw takes double damage from lightning for the spell's duration.

Remove curse or similar magic ends this spell.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, the duration is 24 hours. If you use a spell slot of 8th level or higher, a creature with immunity to lightning damage no longer has advantage on its saving throw. If you use a spell slot of 9th level or higher, the spell lasts until it is dispelled.

BOLGORO NETWEAVER

Wizard on the Run

by Jon Sawatsky

Bolgoro at a Glance

Bolgoro is a charismatic and unscrupulous dwarf whose impulsive nature has entangled him in the affairs of frost giants and shadowy agents of Boreas.

Background

Born on the Docks. Bolgoro grew up on the docks of Stannasgard. His father, a net maker and general laborer, was slain by Visandred the Horse-Eater in one of the dragon's fiery assaults on the city. The young Bolgoro vowed to avenge his father's death but could not abandon his mother who needed the coin he earned to keep the family fed. Bolgoro learned that his quick wit and outgoing nature could be used to his advantage in these early years.

Fire and Loss. In an attack that would inspire King Shipkeeper himself to take action, the red dragon Visandred descended on the docks of Stannasgard and nearly destroyed the entire district. Bolgoro was badly burned in the attack, but his mother and brother both lost their lives. The dwarf now contended with the reality that Visandred had slain his entire family.

Driven to Train. Bolgoro joined the Stannasgard army shortly after the tragic events. He learned to fight with axe, sword,

and shield. He spent his nights under the tutelage of a dwarven practitioner of ring magic who lived near the sea. The affable dwarf's anger was properly channeled by his training, and his hatred for dragons became the foundation of his success in the martial and arcane arts.

Revenge Denied. Before his training allowed him to hunt the dragon that slew his family, King Shipkeeper declared the monster dead. Upon hearing the news, Bolgoro was struck with a crippling melancholy. For a year, the dwarf stopped his training and his studies—helping weave nets at the newly built docks instead. Bolgoro drank and fought—throwing fists at bar patrons and his ghosts alike. Bolgoro abandoned Stannasgard and went North.

Bolgoro's Return. For eleven years, the dwarf wandered the Northlands. This period remains unrecorded, though remote communities along the Bleak Wastes report a dwarf matching his description serving as both hero and mercenary in the region. Then Bolgoro suddenly returned to Stannasgard bearing a staff twice his height—a ring staff, though not of dwarven origins. The dwarf told a dubious tale of discovering frost giants who had stolen the secrets of ring magic and, with prayers to Boreas, forged rings of their own. Bolgoro claimed to have stolen the staff from a powerful frost giant before fleeing. As quickly

as he returned, Bolgoro disappeared again—heading south at great speed.

Hunted. Today, Bolgoro travels through Midgard, never staying in one place for more than a week. He wields the frost giant staff in hopes of unlocking its powers and secrets. All the while, the cold reach of Boreas pursues him in the form of frost wraiths who seek to return the staff to the giants of the Northlands.

Current Goal

Bolgoro has not yet unlocked the true powers of the frost giant's staff. His goal is singular: wield the staff to understand it, thereby increasing his own power and ability to fight the evils of the world.



Roleplaying Tips

Crass. Bolgoro left what manners he had in the Bleak Wastes. He is direct, uncouth, and entirely without pretense. He openly mocks those who speak eloquently.

Melancholic. The dwarf goes through prolonged periods of depression and melancholy. During this time, he is listless, combative, and unreliable.

Bold. Bolgoro has faith in his abilities and is often found leading expeditions into dangerous places or battling against enemies others might flee from.

Plot Hooks (Midgard)

Here are some ways to incorporate Bolgoro into your campaign:

- The party stumbles onto a battle between Bolgoro and the frost wraiths of Boreas while traveling through the wilderness. Pleading for aid, the dwarf presents an opportunity for the PCs to anger Boreas themselves by slaying the wraiths. Bolgoro explains the wraiths will keep coming and offers the party a magic ring for escort to points farther South.
- The party learn Bolgoro's tale while staying in Stannasgard and are approached by the ring mage who once trained the dwarf. Aglirond the Salted offers the party a powerful magical item to track down Bolgoro and give him a simple silver band. Over several weeks, the party tracks the dwarf until they find him in Zobeck, quarreling with guards outside a tavern. Giving him the band, the dwarf's spirits are raised, and he asks them to escort him back to Stannasgard to mount an expedition to slay the returned dragon, Visandred.

Adapting for Other Settings

With the exception of his training in ring magic, Bolgoro is easily worked into most campaign settings. He might act as the catalyst for adventure, offering the party treasure to assist him in slaying some great beast or exploring dangerous ruins. Replace the ring magic with any similar crafting-based magic.

Rather than being pursued by the undead agents of Boreas, Bolgoro is instead wanted for crimes committed in the throes of a melancholic episode. The party are hired as bounty hunters to bring the dwarf to justice.

BOLGORO NETWEAVER

Bolgoro wears patched chain mail armor and a thick, fur-lined cloak made from grey cloth. On his back is a massive iron staff with three silver rings at its head. The bottom of staff is adorned with a sharpened white dragon tooth.

Wanderer. Bolgoro's pursuers keep him on the move. He stays ahead of them by taking strange and unpredictable routes from one place to another. Bolgoro is as likely to be encountered in the depths of some ruin as he is in the streets of populated centers.

Alone. The dwarf travels alone most of the time. This makes it easier to escape the frost wraiths should they find him. Occasionally he attaches himself to a caravan or expedition if it suits his purpose.

BOLGORO NETWEAVER

Medium dwarf (humanoid), neutral good

Armor Class 15 (chain mail; 17 when wielding the *Bastard Staff of Ulvirist*)

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +7

Skills Athletics +6, Arcana +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Halfling
Challenge 8

Bearer of the Bastard Staff of Ulvirist. Bolgoro is attuned to the *Bastard Staff of Ulvirist* (see below). He may use its abilities freely. Bonuses from the staff are included in this stat block.

Champion of the Northlands. Bolgoro's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Ring of Regeneration. Bolgoro is a practitioner of ring magic and is attuned to a *ring of regeneration* which heals him for 1d6 hit points every 10 minutes.

Spellcasting. Bolgoro is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *hoarfrost** (2d4 cold damage), *ray of frost* (2d8 cold damage), *shocking grasp*, *true strike*

1st level (4 slots): *disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *ringstrike**, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness*, *locate object*, *spider climb*

3rd level (3 slots): *fear*, *haste*, *tongues*

4th level (1 slot): *spinning axes**

(*see *Deep Magic: Ring Magic*)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bolgoro makes two attacks with the Bastard Staff of Ulvirist.

Bastard Staff of Ulvirist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Overhead Smash. Bolgoro raises the massive staff over his head and brings it down with force. Bolgoro makes one *Bastard Staff of Ulvirist* attack with advantage. If the attack hits, the creature must succeed a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn.

THE BASTARD STAFF OF ULVIRIST

Weapon (quarterstaff), very rare (requires attunement, must be able to cast 1st-level wizard spells to attune)

One end of this heavy iron staff is pierced by three silver rings the size of dinner plates; the rings move freely and make an audible chiming noise as the bearer moves. The other end of the staff is tipped with the fang of an

ancient white dragon, held in place by thick cords of sinew. The staff is nearly twice the length of a normal quarterstaff, and its bearer must have a Strength score of at least 14 to make weapon attacks with it, though they can attune to it even if they do not meet this requirement.

The staff belongs to a frost giant named Ulvirist who extracted the secrets of dwarven ring magic from a captive dwarf. The wizard died in the process but not before the giant learned to imbue three large silver rings with the power of the Bleak Wastes. The staff was stolen by a dwarven hero from Stannasgard with whom it remains. Ulvirist implored the frost giant priest of Boreas to help return his staff, and so were the agents of the cold god sent to retrieve it.

While attuned to this staff, you gain a +1 to ranged spell attack rolls, +1 to melee weapon attack and damage rolls made with the staff, and the DC to save against your spells increases by one. Melee weapon attacks made with the staff are considered magical and have a reach of 10 ft. Additionally, you gain access to the following spells, which you can prepare as though transcribed into your spellbook. You lose knowledge of these spells if you become unattuned to the staff, and you may not copy them into your spellbook: *hoarfrost*, *ringstrike*, and *spinning axes*.

Sunder the Glacier. Your ringstrike spell's damage dice increase to 1d12.

FROST WRAITH OF BOREAS TEMPLATE

The frost wraiths of Boreas are wraiths with the following modifications:

- 14 AC
- 82 (11d8 + 33) hit points
- Immunity to cold damage
- Life Drain attacks do an additional 7 (2d6) cold damage
- Challenge rating 6
- Can cast *locate creature* (1/day)

REGAR NERYAN

Arcane Knight, Unknowing Fey Agent

by Mike Welham

Regar Neryan at a Glance

Regar is a centaur whose magical awakening along the shadow roads drove him to become an arcane knight, complete with a lance he uses as a magical implement. He serves as a Runkelstad war mage.

Background

Rothenian Born. Regar is the eldest son of the chieftain of the nomadic Gathering Storm Clan. The centaur clan has a reputation for banditry, but it is not as bloodthirsty as other clans. Even as a youngster, Regar felt pangs of guilt when he had to dispatch a stubborn foe and relief when his clanmates allowed innocents to escape. He felt pressure to harden himself to the fate of their marks and enemies, especially since he would assume leadership of the clan when his father died.

Shadow Road Journey. During a battle with shadow fey with which the Gathering Storm Clan had initiated combat to gain their wealth and magic, one of the shadow fey opened a portal to a shadow road through which her compatriots could escape. Regar, leading the charge at the time, was steps ahead of his clanmates and entered the shadow road alone in pursuit. The shadow fey could have slain the solitary centaur. However, they decided to stage an elaborate prank on Regar

with the end goal of throwing his clan into disarray. Regar stumbled through a hedge maze, reaching the center after two days of searching. There he witnessed an elaborate yet realistic illusion detailing an ancient fey creating the first centaurs by fusing humans and horses together. The centaur, awestruck by this revelation, pledged loyalty to this unknowable being, incidentally forming a pact with it and setting Regar down the warlock's path. The delight of the shadow fey with the potential chaos caused by Regar quickly shifted to surprise when, as the centaur returned to the Rothenian Plains, he spontaneously declared he would protect the weak and uphold virtue as a sign of his fealty. He further declared he would not divulge the "secret" of the centaurs' creation.

Newly Minted Knight. The excursion took several days for Regar, but he appeared less than an hour after he left. Regar understood his newfound outlook conflicted with his clan's and reasoned the best course of action would be to leave, never to return. Remembering the centaurs' numerous clashes with Magdar Kingdom knights, the centaur decided to make the kingdom his new home where he could act as a stalwart defender of the innocent. Within eight months of applying for knighthood in the Order of the Undying Sun and despite some initial skepticism from

the senior knight to whom Regar served as squire, he became a war mage, proving equally capable in combat and in spellslinging.

Trusted Mentor. Regar has grown as a knight, his blending of martial and magical might giving him an uncommon perspective within the order. While his squires had misgivings at the outset of their service, they found the centaur a source of wise counsel. When Regar leaves service as a knight, he hopes to settle down in Runkelstad where he can become an instructor at the College of Wands.

Current Goal

Regar is at a crossroads, deciding whether to retire and teach the next generation of knights or to end his career—and perhaps his life—on a glorious crusade against the dragonkind of the Mharoti Empire.

Roleplaying Tips

Honorable. Regar always keeps his promises, sometimes to his detriment. He carefully weighs the outcomes of making a promise before committing to it. The sole exception is during the heat of combat where spontaneity overtakes him. He is quick to give his word on the battlefield, but he ensures he sticks to even the most reckless pledge.



Meditative. Contrasting with his impetuous nature in battle, Regar spends time deliberating on points of conversation, especially when they turn to philosophical matters. Those who mistake his delay in responding as stupidity are surprised when he provides an elegant solution to a problem or provides a welcome bit of advice.

Secret's Burden. Regar's oath to his patron included keeping the knowledge about the centaurs' "origin" to himself. If the subject of centaurs and their place in the world comes up, Regar quickly changes the subject out of fear he might accidentally reveal information he shouldn't.

Plot Hooks (Midgard)

Here are some ways to incorporate Regar into your campaign:

- Word reaches Regar about Clan Rhoet's plan to attack the Gathering Storm clan. He can't take a regiment of knights to stop the attack and instead hopes to find companions to thwart Clan Rhoet. With Regar's father dead as a result of the battle, Regar faces the decision to assume leadership of his former clan or return to service as a knight.
- The Queen of Night and Magic has suffered diminished might as Regar unwittingly advances his patron's plots. She sends shadow fey to ascertain the patron's identity and assassinate the centaur if necessary. The characters have an opportunity to save Regar's life during an assassination attempt.

Adapting for Other Settings

Regar could be a rarer NPC in other settings where centaurs are less common. In such settings or in those without a nation formally centered on knights and a chivalric code, Regar serves as an itinerant wanderer who fights injustice wherever he finds it.

REGAR NERYAN

Regar stands 9 feet tall from hoof to the top of his head. He protects his torso with chain mail, and plate barding covers his lower body, leaving his lower legs and tail exposed. He has short dark hair shot through with streaks of gray, and his tail, fashioned into a neat ponytail, has similar coloration. The tip of the lance he wields crackles with eldritch energy.

Impulsive Action. When combat starts, Regar is eager to join the fray. Intricate plans that include the centaur often go awry as he executes his tasks moments ahead of schedule. Oddly, this has not cost him in battle nor has his recklessness resulted in his allies' deaths or injuries.

Relenting Combatant. Regar takes his oath to protect the innocent seriously and accepts surrender from his foes. He also refuses to attack opponents who can't defend themselves, at least in his estimation.

Spell-Charged Lance. The centaur has no qualms with augmenting his lance with spells he delivers with a touch or as part of an attack. He believes he is justified in using his talents in righteous battle.

REGAR NERYAN

Large monstrosity, lawful good

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 221 (26d10 + 78)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +8

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +6, Survival +6

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Centaur, Common, Sylvan

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Charge. If Regar moves at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a lance attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 19 (3d12) piercing damage.

Innate Spellcasting. Regar's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

1/day each: *conjure fey, forcecage, glibness*

Pact Weapon Lance. Regar's lance attacks are magical.

Spellcasting. Regar is a 16th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, friends, true strike*, GM's choice

5th level (3 slots): *blink, calm emotions, dispel magic, dominate beast, dominate person, faerie fire, greater invisibility, hold monster, phantasmal force, plant growth, seeming, sleep, witch bolt*, GM's choice

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Regar makes two attacks: one with his lance and one with his hooves.

Lance. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d12 + 3) piercing.

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

Imbue Lance (Recharge 4–6). As a bonus action, Regar casts one of his spells, charging his lance with the spell. If he hits a target creature with his lance, the spell also affects the creature. If Regar uses his lance attack just to deliver the spell, he has advantage on the attack roll and deals no damage. The spell fades at the beginning of his next turn.

Pact of the Blade. Regar creates his pact weapon, a lance, in his empty hand. If the lance is more than 5 feet away from Regar for 1 minute or more, the weapon disappears. If he uses this ability while the lance is present, the new lance replaces the existing one.

REACTIONS

Reflect Charm. When a creature attempts to charm Regar, he can turn the charm back on the creature, which must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by Regar for 1 minute or until the creature takes damage.

SPELL IMBUEMENT

3rd-level transmutation (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (copper wire)

Duration: 8 hours

For the duration of the casting you, you can imbue a melee weapon with one of your spells that targets a single creature. A weapon can only hold one spell in this way. The weapon's wielder can use a bonus action to discharge the spell on a successful hit, which ends the spell for that weapon.

SURPRISE STRIKE (ELDRITCH INVOCATION)

Prerequisite: 5th level, Pact of the Blade feature

If your pact weapon is a ranged weapon, you do not have disadvantage on the attack roll if you are within 5 feet of a hostile creature who can see you and isn't incapacitated. If your pact

weapon is a melee weapon, you can throw it (range 10/30). The first time you use this feature with the melee weapon during a particular combat, you have advantage on the attack roll.

RETURN TO ME (ELDRITCH INVOCATION)

Prerequisite: 9th level, Pact of the Blade feature, Surprise Strike feature

When you throw a melee weapon using Surprise Strike, you can use a bonus action to

recall the weapon to your hand. You can't do so again until you complete a short or long rest.







MAGIC



DWARVES AT WAR

by Wolfgang Baur

The news from the Ironcrag Cantons is always of interest to lowland humans, given how often the followers of Mavros hire dwarves to serve as mercenaries in the Seven Cities or to help the Magdar Kingdom hold the line against the Mharoti in the east. In recent years though, many small dwarven companies are forming up to go west to the Wastes or north to the Wolfmark and the free city at Johzt. Some of this is driven by piety and some of it by greed; we'll address each in turn here.

The Word of the Forge

Many young dwarven warriors are convinced that the opportunities to find ancient vaults in the Wastes are better now than in prior times, largely because of the Forge Prophecy proclaimed by Toveli Rogest, priest of Volund and master of the Templeforge halls. His oracular pronouncement claims that cantonal dwarves are poised to seize new lands, rather than defending human kingdoms, if only they can accomplish two things: 1) find the *Horn of Verrante* from the treasure vaults of the west and 2) drive back the vampires and ghouls and establish the righteous rule of the living in Morgau, Doresh, and Krakovar. It is, frankly, a call to religious action both by followers of Thor-Perun and by all dwarves of good heart.

As part of this prophecy, a new battle chant has spread among the faithful, giving strength to their arms and axes and victory against dust goblins and ghouls alike. Older, more traditional spells such as *hedgehog dozen*, *march of death*, and *storm of axes* have also found new favor.

News from the Dwarfmoot

The Dwarfmoot has been lively and not just because of Toveli's prophecy and the restlessness of a young generation of reavers. Other interests have been proclaimed loudly, in particular the wish of Jaro Whitebeard, Commander of the Black Fortress and leader of the Grisal Canton, to form a standing body of troops to push hard against Morgau and the ghouls of Krakovar. All dwarves at the moot are in favor of this in principle, though the matter is more fraught when the question of pay arises. Grisal is not a wealthy canton, and the folk of Bundeshausen and Gunnacks are happy to fund some of this Great Cantonal Levy and claim much of the glory. However, they both insist that one of their generals leads it. The discussion continues whether Grisal troops will fight for a "soft canton" leader, and meanwhile, Toveli Rogest strives to gather axe-dwarves and others to the new "Great Canton" banner with promises of plunder from Krakovar.

The dwarves of Grisal did not wait for the decision; some are going to attend Queen Dorytta's Queensmeet to ask for her promise of pay in exchange for this Great Levy and to call a few of the more experienced knights to bring their cavalry north against Morgau. Whether this will come to anything is open to debate; already other cantons accuse Grisal of "speaking for other cantons" and attempting to lead the Ironcrag into a larger engagement than already exists. The dour dwarves of Grisal point to their own losses and the dangers of the undead and insist that other cantons not rely on Grisal as "both sword and shield and strength of arms" against the undead. They feel they have carried too much of the burden for too long.

The Dwarfmoot has thus been a cauldron of varying opinions, many spilling out into sharp insults, muddy fistfights, and even a few instances of beard pulling or beard cutting (both punishable offenses: the first by a fine, the second by expulsion from the Dwarfmoot).

For a general list of events that might enliven a Dwarfmoot, consult the "Events at the Dwarfmoot" table (see next page).

Dwarven Battle Magic

Dwarves spend a large portion of their summer in mercenary work, and reavers plan their spring raids all through the winter, so battle magic is often on their minds. In addition to the standard sorts of arcane improvements to their roster and abilities common to the human legions such as the Wands of Runkelstad and the Bemmean arcanists, the cantonal dwarves have several secrets spells that they seldom share with outsiders. These are described here; human and darakhul foes are familiar with them from the battlefield certainly but generally have no access to the formulas used.

BATTLE CHANT

2nd-level enchantment (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a swinging censer of incense)

Duration: Concentration, up to 5 minutes

You bless up all allied creatures of your choice within range. Whenever a target lands a successful hit before the spell ends, the target can add 1 to the damage roll.



When cast by multiple casters chanting in unison, the same increases to 2 points added to the damage roll.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can extend the range by 10 feet for each slot level above 2nd.

HEDGEHOG DOZEN

3rd-level illusion

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 minute

Eleven illusory duplicates of the touched creature appear in its space. A creature affected by *hedgehog dozen* seems to have a dozen arms, shields, and weapons—a swarm of partially overlapping, identical creatures. Until the spell ends, these duplicates move with the target and mimic its actions, shifting position so it's impossible to track which image is real. You can use your action to dismiss the illusory duplicates.

While surrounded by duplicates, a creature gains advantage against any opponent because of the bewildering number of weapons and movements.

Each time a creature targets you with an attack during the spell's duration, roll a d8 to determine whether the attack instead targets one of your duplicates. On a roll of 1, it strikes you. On any other roll it removes one of your duplicates; when you have only five duplicates remaining, the spell ends.

A creature is unaffected by this spell if it can't see, if it relies on senses other than sight, such as blindsight, or if it can perceive illusions as false as with truesight.

MARCH OF THE DEAD

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 50 feet

Components: V, S, M (a prayer scroll with names of the fallen)

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell animates recently dead to remove them from a battlefield. Choose one corpse of a Medium or Small humanoid per level of the caster (within range). Your spell imbues the targets with an animating spirit, raising them as construct creatures similar in appearance to flesh golems, though with the strength and abilities of zombies. Dwarves use this to return the bodies of the fallen to clan tombs and to deny the corpses the foul attention of ghouls, necromancers, and similar foes.

On each of your turns, you can use a bonus action to mentally command all the creatures you made with this spell if the creatures are within 60 feet of you. You decide what action the creatures will take and where they will move during the next day; you cannot command them to guard. If you issue no commands, the creatures only defend themselves against hostile creatures. Once given an order and direction of march, the creatures continue to follow it until they arrive at the destination you named or until 24 hours have elapsed when the spell ends and the corpses fall lifeless once more.

To tell creatures to move for another 24 hours, you must cast this spell on the creatures again before the current 24-hour period ends. This use of the spell reasserts your control over up to 50 creatures you have animated with this spell rather than animating a new one.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, you animate or reassert control over two additional construct creatures for each slot level above 3rd (two creatures/level at 4th, three creatures/level at 5th). Each of the creatures must come from a different corpse.

EVENTS AT THE DWARFMOOT

d20 RESULT

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | A bitter feud has erupted between dwarves of two clan holdings. Several scathing songs have been composed, declaiming the faults of one or another clan, and both sides have seen scuffles and insults hurled during otherwise festive meetings. |
| 2–3 | A case of ownership of a particular gold claim is to be settled at the moot. Roll additional d6: 1 = the judge has gone missing, 2–3 = one side has taken a hostage unless the case is dropped, 4 = the gold claim seems to have been mined in stealth since the first complaint and the gold is gone, 5 = both sides have pledged the funds to the defense of Grisal, 6 = a new and human claimant has muddied the case. |
| 4–5 | A group of female dwarves from Alpentor is at the Dwarfmoot, rousing much curiosity. They all wear bandannas and heavy clothes, and they claim to wish to take up arms in the spring as shieldmaidens, quite against Alpentor custom. They call themselves the “Veiled Sisters” and seem quite competent with weapons and divine magic. |
| 6 | A famous elderly dwarven smith, Jan “Copperbeard” Desmeldin, seeks an apprentice. He is asking candidates to show their best work; competition is quite keen. |
| 7–8 | An ax-throwing contest is announced with the prize of a golden axe head to the winner (400 gp value). |
| 9 | One of the ravenfolk is attending the Dwarfmoot and seems to be consulting various sages, rune shapers, and ring mages about some arcane matter. |
| 10 | Three dwarves have taken seriously ill; poisoning of some food or drink is suspected but cannot be proven. |

STORM OF AXES

4th-level conjuration (battle)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 25 feet

Components: V, S, M (axe handle)

Duration: concentration + 1 round

You conjure up dozens of axes and direct them in a pattern in chopping, whirling mayhem. The blades fill eight 5-foot squares in a line 40 feet long or in a double-strength line 20 feet long and 10 deep. The axes cause 6d8 slashing damage to creatures in the area at the moment the spell is cast or half damage with a successful Dexterity saving throw. By maintaining concentration, you can move the swarm of axes up to 20 feet per round in any direction you wish. If the storm of axes moves into spaces containing creatures, they immediately must make another Dexterity saving throw or suffer damage again.

Dwarven Magical Items of the Cantons

The dwarves make a huge variety of tools and weapons for their expeditions into the lowlands. Other items, particularly their temple horns, are rarely taken out of the cantons themselves. Both types of items are described here.

Note that the temple horns are somewhat religious and require attunement by the faithful. This is as normal attunement; however, it succeeds only if attuned to a follower of the god in question. This need not be a cleric, druid, or other spellcaster; any sincere follower of the god can attune the item. While these are usually dwarven followers of Khors, Ninkash, Volund, or Thor-Perun, cases have been recorded of human and even ravenfolk heroes successfully using temple horns.

-
- 11–12 A crossbow contest is announced with a prize of a mithral crossbow bolt to the winner (400 gp value).
-
- 13 A young dwarf claims to be an orphan and tries to ingratiate himself with a dwarven PC, seeking a mentor. He is far too young to be on his own and may be a runaway apprentice.
-
- 14 A high price is offered for strong, hardworking thralls brought to the Dwarfmoot and sold for work in the mines. Indeed, mines are shorthanded everywhere.
-
- 15 A griffon egg is offered for auction. Bidding begins at just 100 gp, but the priests of Templeforge will pay as much as 500 for it.
-
- 16 A muleskinner and an entire mule train of ale, cider, and provisions from Gunnacks has gone missing on the way to the Dwarfmoot. No one is sure what happened to Eclara “Bootleather” Gunnacks, the tough leader of the mule train, but the gathering is uneasy about this and sends out search parties.
-
- 17 The stones and law tablets of the Dwarfmoot have been defaced with blood during the night. Agents of Morgau are suspected, though some say it is just a foolish prank.
-
- 18 A strange priestess of Ninkash visited the Dwarfmoot this year, offering wine and praising Baccolon and speaking Elvish. Some believe she has been possessed by an elvish ghost or banshee.
-
- 19 Three wild rocs have taken up residence in the foothills near the western wastes, stealing several mounts and mules from dwarves in the western cantons. So far, no one has been able to chase them off.
-
- 20 Rumors swirl that Volund has possessed a famously pious follower who is watching the Dwarfmoot and speaking in an archaic language. Each item she touches is blessed.
-

GRISAL TRUMPET

Uncommon wondrous item

A brass trumpet coiled into a circle and sometimes decorated with black cords or ribbons, these are sacred to the sun god Khors. Its holder can use an action to blow the trumpet, which imbues all bones or corpses within 60 feet with a mimicry of life, raising them as

undead creatures shining with the radiant light of the sun (as a *light* spell). The targets become skeletons if you choose bones or zombies if you choose corpses.



On each of your turns, you can use a bonus action to mentally command any creature you called up with this item if the creature is within 60 feet of you. (If you control more than one creature, you can command any or all of them at the same time, issuing the same command to each one.) You decide what action the creature will take and where it will move during its next turn, or you can issue a general command, such as to guard a particular chamber or corridor. If you issue no commands, the creature only defends itself against hostile creatures. Once given an order, a creature continues to follow it until its task is complete.

The creatures remain under your control for 24 hours, after which the remains vanish with a gentle pulse of sunlight.

A *Grisal Trumpet* has three charges per day; these are regained each day at dawn.

HORN OF NINKASH

Rare wondrous item, requires attunement by the faithful

Sometimes called a “feasting horn,” a *Horn of Ninkash* is usually shaped like a drinking horn or sometimes a bit like a beer stein with a handle and a mouthpiece for blowing. When the horn is sounded, a raucous noise such as a cheer or toast emits from the horn along with a feeling of fellowship and confidence to all who hear it. They gain a 1d6 bonus to a check or attack made within 12 hours of hearing the horn. A creature benefits from this blessing of Ninkash only once per day.

The bearer of a horn of Ninkash can always give commands to a keg golem and expect them to be obeyed.

HORN OF VERRANTE

Rare wondrous item, requires attunement by the faithful

Made of gold, remorhaz ivory, and chased with designs of interwoven shields and axes in finest mithral, the *Horn of Verrante* is possibly one of the few items left from the height of dwarven power, before the Mage Wars and before the elven legions commanded much of the Crossroads, the West, and the Seven Cities.

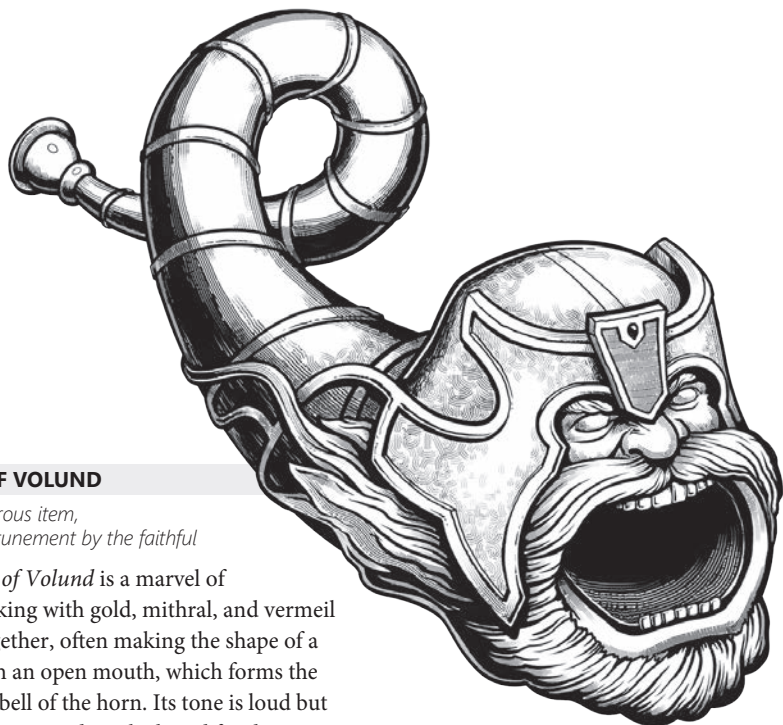
You can take an action to blow the *Horn of Verrante*. Doing so invokes powerful battle magic. (Spells marked with an asterisk [*] are from *Midgard Heroes Handbook* and/or *Deep Magic: Battle Magic*.)

- 1 charge for warning shout* (for all allies that hear the horn)
- 2 charges for wresting wind*
- 3 charges for inspiring speech* (though with effective casting time of 1 action)

If used with ley line attunement, the Horn of Verrante’s powers increase sharply.

- 0 charges are expended for warning shout*
- 1 charge is expended for wresting wind*
- 2 charges are expended for inspiring speech* (though with effective casting time of 1 action)
- 3 charges are expended for instant fortification*
- 4 charges are expended for holy ground*

The Horn of Verrante regains 1d6 charges each day at dawn. If it is ever blown and its last charge expended, the desired effect occurs. In addition, the mouth of the horn is instantly sealed by a small leaden plug that cannot be removed without destroying the horn. To unseal it, the Horn of Verrante must be blown at the site of a great dwarven victory in battle, or it must be the subject of a holy aura spell cast at Templeforge or a similar high holy altar of the dwarven gods.



HORN OF VOLUND

Rare wondrous item, requires attunement by the faithful

The *Horn of Volund* is a marvel of metalworking with gold, mithral, and vermeil mixed together, often making the shape of a dwarf with an open mouth, which forms the sounding bell of the horn. Its tone is loud but not unpleasant and can be heard for distances up to 2 miles without difficulty.

You can take an action to blow the *Horn of Volund*. Doing so invokes divine light to bless the armor and shields of all allied creatures within 60 feet and either wearing Medium or heavier armor or carrying a shield. Those given the blessing of Volund gain advantage on all saving throws for four rounds.

HORN OF THOR-PERUN

Uncommon wondrous item

This silver horn is decorated with thunderbolts of gold and often with a holy symbol of Thor-Perun included in its maker's mark. You can take an action to blow the *Horn of Thor-Perun*. Doing so generates an immediate two-step shift in the weather, growing cloudy and thundering in the distance. At the same time, all weapons held by your allies are blessed and add 1d6 lightning damage on their next melee or ranged attack.

DRAUGHT OF THE BLACK OWL

Common Potion

By drinking this potion, you transform yourself into a large black owl. The transformation lasts until dawn or until the drinker drops to 0 hit points or dies. Your game statistics, except for mental ability scores and hp, are replaced by Str 3, Dex 13, Con 8, AC 11, and darkvision 120 ft. You gain keen vision and hearing and thus advantage on all Perception checks. You retain your alignment and personality.

The owl form is limited in the actions it can perform by the nature of its new form, and you can't speak, cast spells, or take any other action that require hands or speech.

Your gear melds into the new form. While in owl form, only druids with Wildshape can activate, use, wield, or otherwise benefit from any equipment, and even this equipment must be worn or grasped (such as a ring or wand).

AMIDST THE DUST: HARDY SURVIVORS AND LOST RELICS

by Dan Dillon

(with special thanks to Brandon Hodge for his work on *Sunken Empires*)

Midgard's Western Wastes are a wound that will never heal, festering in the wake of the Great Mage Wars. Fine dust chokes the blasted landscape, swirling across dunes, craters, and ruins held in the grip of deadly unpredictable magic. Empires lay buried in the wasteland's dust, and beneath even those remains, echoes of lost Ankeshel rest in the cold dark.

In the shadows of the Dread Walkers and their spawn, few creatures could survive, let alone thrive. And yet, even in the wastes, life endures and flourishes. Pilgrims and priests travel to the Seat of Mavros. Scholars and explorers brave the ruins in search of power and knowledge, and the dust goblins slowly grow into a formidable power.

Druid Circle: Circle of Dust

Groups of dust goblin shamans, druids, ruin hunters, and explorers once banded together, united by their lives spent crawling the Western Wastes. These canny survivors eked out a living among the dust and unpredictable magic as they searched out lost relics from empires long buried. The Circle of Dust is the result of their study. Today, most of the Circle of Dust are dust goblins, but druids of other races brave or foolish enough to venture into the wastes to earn the circle's trust have joined their ranks.

Druids of the Circle of Dust align their magic with the unpredictable mystic nature of the wastes. They draw sustenance from it, protect against otherworldly creatures, and gather lost knowledge hidden beneath the ancient sands.

CIRCLE SPELLS

The shattered magic of the wastes infusing your being grants you knowledge of certain spells. At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level you gain access to the spells listed for that level in the Circle of Dust Spells table.

Once you gain access to one of these spells, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. If you gain access to a spell that doesn't appear on the druid spell list, the spell is nonetheless a druid spell for you.

Circle of Dust Spells

DRUID LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>levitate, locate object</i>
5th	<i>create food and water, magic circle</i>
7th	<i>banishment, death ward</i>
9th	<i>hallow, legend lore</i>

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

At 2nd level, you gain proficiency with Ankeshelian medium armor, relics, shields,

and weapons. You can wear and use Ankeshelian armor and shields made of metal.

RESONATING SHROUD

Starting at 2nd level, you gain the ability to create a field of magical energy around yourself that warps ambient magic. As an action, you can expend a use of Wild Shape to create an aura, which fills the area within 10 feet of you. While this aura is active, you gain the following benefits:

- Your melee weapon attacks deal an extra 1d6 force damage to any target they hit.
- Your AC increases by 2.
- When you cast spells with a range of touch, your reach extends to anywhere within your shroud. Other aspects of the spells are unchanged.

- When you, or an ally within your shroud, cast spells in the Western Wastes, you don't risk unstable results from your spells (see *Midgard Worldbook*).

The aura lasts for 1 hour or until you use your Wild Shape again.

OTHERWORLDLY RESONANCE

At 6th level, your mind transforms due to the twisting energies of the wastes. While your Resonating Shroud is active, you can no longer be charmed or frightened, and aberrations must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC to attack you. An aberration that fails this save can choose a new target, or it wastes the attack.



MYSTIC ABSORPTION

At 10th level, you have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Additionally, when you take damage from a spell, you can use your reaction to absorb some of the energy. You can expend Hit Dice to regain hit points as if you finished a short rest. The maximum number of hit dice you can expend is equal to half your druid level. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

SHROUD DISRUPTION

At 14th level, your Resonating Shroud now extends to the area within 30 feet of you, and your foes treat the area within your shroud as difficult terrain. A creature hostile to you that ends its turn in your shroud takes 1d8 force damage.

Ankeshelian Relics

The devices and armaments of lost Ankeshel make use of vril technology to achieve strange effects, ranging from simple but effective all the way to nothing short of astounding. Like the batteries and weapons of Cassadega (see *Midgard Worldbook*), vanishingly few Ankeshelian relics are functional when discovered. Rather, it might take dozens of specimens of a given piece of vril technology to yield enough components for artisans to refurbish a single item. Despite its nonmagical nature, attempts to reproduce vril technology without using salvaged materials have all failed.

Ankeshelian devices, architecture, and surviving artwork often incorporate a mysterious reddish-gold metal called orichalcum. Orichalcum used in the construction of magic items or in powered vril devices seems to have a faint inner light and appears slightly translucent.

Ankeshelian weapons and armor require their own proficiency, which characters can train using the downtime training rules.

VRIL BATTERIES

All vril technology requires a power source to function, and the only such sources known to successfully power these devices are vril batteries. A vril battery is a glass cylinder of varying size, depending on how much power the battery can hold.

Inside the cylinder is a stack, or stacks, of alternating copper and orichalcum discs suspended in a briny alchemical solution. The ends of the cylinder are capped with filigreed brass, set with terminals and thumb screws that allow the battery to be plugged into a vril device, either directly or by means of a canvas-sleeved copper wire or cable. Cassadegan experts can recharge a depleted vril battery by replacing the spent discs and solution.

Connecting or removing a vril battery from a device requires a bonus action for a small or medium battery and an action for a large or heavy battery.

SMALL

The smallest vril power vessel is 3 inches long and 1 inch wide. It holds 10 charges at full power.

VRIL BATTERIES

BATTERY	COST	RECHARGE	TOTAL CHARGES	WEIGHT
Small	150 gp	100 gp	10	1 lb.
Medium	750 gp	500 gp	25	4 lb.
Large	1,500 gp	1,000 gp	50	8 lb.
Heavy	3,000 gp	2,000 gp	100	16 lb.

MEDIUM

A middle ground between convenience and capacity, a medium vril battery is 8 inches long and 2 inches wide. At full power it holds 25 charges.

LARGE

The most common vril battery, and the first variety discovered, is a glass cylinder about 12 inches long, and 3 inches wide. It holds 50 charges when fully powered.

HEAVY

Rarest of all, heavy vril batteries are too large to connect directly to all but the largest and usually stationary vril relics. Nearly 2 feet long and 8 inches wide, these monstrous capacitors have fittings on their end caps for straps or other fasteners. They can be fitted and worn like a backpack and connected to devices by cables. A heavy vril battery has enough terminals to connect to 4 devices at one time. At full power, it holds 100 charges.

In addition to its cumbersome weight, heavy vril batteries are dangerous to carry and use. The battery has AC 15 and 20 hit points. When reduced to less than 10 hit points, it discharges an arc of lightning into the creature that damaged it with a melee attack and into the creature wearing or carrying it

at the time. Each creature takes 5d4 lightning damage or half as much with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, and the battery loses 5 charges.

If reduced to 0 hit points, the battery shatters and releases all of its remaining charge. A creature that hit it with a melee attack and a creature wearing or carrying the battery each take 1d6 lightning damage for every 2 charges the battery currently holds or half as much damage with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.

ANKESHELIAN ARMOR

While ancient Ankeshel likely created and employed armor of all varieties, only metal armor made of bronze, copper, orichalcum, mithral, adamantine, or other wondrous alloys survive to this day. Surviving armor must have new leather straps and fittings attached, which requires a character proficient in blacksmith's or leatherworker's tools and costs 5 gp in materials. A suit of Ankeshelian medium armor without vril technology is worth an additional 250 gp and heavy armor an extra 500 gp for their historical and collector's value.

The most prized and rare Ankeshelian armor and shields also contain vril technology.

ANKESHELIAN ARMOR

ARMOR	COST	LIGHTNING DAMAGE	WEIGHT
<i>Medium Armor</i>			
Charged breastplate	1,500 gp	1d6	25 lb.
Charged half plate	2,000 gp	1d6	45 lb.
<i>Heavy Armor</i>			
Charged splint	2,500 gp	1d10	70 lb.
Charged plate	3,000 gp	1d10	75 lb.
<i>Shield</i>			
Charged shield	150 gp	1d4	8 lb.
Vril shield	1,000 gp	—	10 lb.

ANKESHELIAN SKIFFS

SKIFF	COST	SPEED	CREW	PASSENGERS	CARGO (POUNDS)
Steed	5,000 gp	60 ft./7 mph	1	1	250
Carriage	10,000 gp	50 ft./6 mph	1	5	1,000
Soaring	30,000 gp	80 ft./9 mph	1	1	250

CHARGED ARMOR

Some of the armor and shields recovered from Ankeshelian sites are outfitted with ports suitable for connecting vril batteries and strange copper and orichalcum channels and coils running along the outer surface of the bronze plates. While a vril battery is connected to a functional suit of charged armor you are wearing, you can activate the armor as a bonus action.

While active, lightning runs through the armor's channels and coils, humming softly and occasionally discharging small sparks. A creature within 5 feet of you that hits you with a melee attack takes lightning damage (1d4 for a shield, 1d6 for medium armor, 1d8 for heavy armor). Each time a creature takes damage from the armor, the armor drains 1 charge from the attached vril battery.

VRIL SHIELD

A vril shield is a small round shield, perhaps 1 foot across. Six small orichalcum disks sit along the rim of the shield with a slightly larger disk in the center. Orichalcum channels connect all the disks together. A small, medium, or heavy vril battery can attach to terminals on the back side. As a bonus action, you can activate a vril shield

you are wielding. When activated, the shield drains 1 charge from the attached vril battery and projects a larger disc of crackling, translucent blue force from its face. The force shield lasts until the start of your next turn and grants you 3/4 cover.

ANKESHELIAN SKIFF

These vril-powered vehicles are among the rarest and most amazing Ankeshelian relics, and only a few have been restored to functional condition. Skiffs are made of shaped stone and metals. Originally mistaken for sculptures and statues, the skiffs discovered so far all appear to be stylized animals such as horses, griffons, dragons, or large sea creatures. An intact skiff has a number of metal and orichalcum levitation pads, controls, and a battery port. You can activate or deactivate a powered skiff as an action.

Operating a skiff requires proficiency in Ankeshelian vehicles. Attempting to operate a skiff without proficiency requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence check to operate any function. While operating a skiff, you can use its speed to move instead of your own.

Crew. Ankeshelian skiffs require only a single person to operate them. Sudden or complex maneuvers might require Dexterity

COVER AND FACING

At the GM's discretion, attacks that originate from behind an active vril shield might reduce or even eliminate the cover it provides. Use

this sparingly, however, to avoid complicating combat and removing the usefulness of the feature.



AC	HP	DAMAGE THRESHOLD
17	50	—
17	75	10
17	50	—



(Ankeshelian vehicles) checks. Skiffs are designed for Medium creatures. Small creatures might have difficulty operating the controls comfortably, and Large or larger creatures can't operate a skiff.

Passengers. The number of creatures that can ride comfortably on a skiff. Seating is designed for Medium creatures, so two Small creatures might be able to take a single seat with some discomfort.

Cargo. This indicates how many pounds of cargo the skiff can carry.

Damage Threshold. A carriage skiff has immunity to all damage unless it takes 10 or more points of damage, in which case it takes damage as normal. Any damage less than 10 is considered superficial and doesn't reduce the skiff's hit points.

Skiff Repair. Repairs to a damaged skiff can be made while the skiff is inactive. Repairing 1 hit point of damage requires 1 day and 20 gp for materials and can only be accomplished by Cassadegan artisans. A fabricate spell cast on a skiff repairs 10 points of damage.

STEED

Steed skiffs most often resemble stylized horses with two horizontal metal discs, one at the front and another at the back, in place of legs. It has a seat built into its back, foot rests where stirrups would be, and a stone and metal ring or loop in line with what would be a living animal's spine along the back of its neck. The ring is a control device a rider grips with both hands.

Behind the control ring is a cylindrical port that can accept a small, medium, or large vril battery. A heavy battery can be connected to it with a cable, but the immense battery can't fit into the port. It drains 1 charge per hour while active and hovers between six inches and a maximum of 10 feet off the ground. It has a speed of 60 feet and ignores ground-based difficult terrain such as mud or rubble. It can move over water and other liquids but can't climb vertical surfaces. Steep slopes are difficult terrain.

CARRIAGE

A carriage skiff is a much larger version of the steed. Instead of a saddle-like seat, it has a recessed compartment with seats for a driver and passenger and a larger cabin or bed in the rear. The bed has room for additional passengers or cargo. The compartments provide half cover to creatures sitting in them.

This larger vehicle has six levitation pads. The battery port can hold any size vril battery, and the carriage skiff drains 2 charges per hour while active. It has a speed of 50 feet with the same movement restrictions as the steed skiff.

Some carriage skiffs have enclosed crew and cargo compartments with hatches that create airtight seals. These varieties can dive underwater with a swimming speed of 50 feet and produce fresh air while the compartments are sealed. While sealed and producing air, the carriage skiff drains a total of 3 charges per hour.

SOARING

Soaring skiffs are the rarest of all Ankeshelian skiffs with the number of functioning specimens in the single digits. They appear similar to steed skiffs with their appearance resembling avian creatures rather than horses but with an additional levitation pad. A soaring skiff can function as a steed skiff with a speed of 80 feet, or you can cause it to fly with a speed of 80 feet (hover). While flying, a soaring skiff drains 3 charges per hour.

ANKESHELIAN WEAPONS

In addition to the more common Cassadegan coil rifle (see *Midgard Worldbook*), several varieties of ancient vril weaponry have surfaced in the sunken and buried ruins of Ankeshel. Most of these weapons are enhanced melee weapons that draw on vril batteries to fuel their destructive components, but skilled experts have recently restored a few new vril ranged weapons.

Ankeshelian weapons require vril batteries to function. A one-handed weapon can accept a small vril battery directly or any other size battery with a cable. A two-handed weapon can accept up to a large vril battery directly and a heavy battery via cable.

CHARGED WEAPON

Ankeshelian melee weapons have copper and orichalcum coils built into their blades or heads with small terminals for vril battery connections. You can activate or deactivate a charged weapon you're holding as a bonus action. When you hit a creature with an active charged weapon, the creature takes an extra 1d8 lightning. Each hit drains 1 charge from the attached vril battery.

COIL REVOLVER

This sophisticated vril pistol is heavy and ornate. It fires ferromagnetic projectiles at high speed using magnetic coils in its barrel. A revolving cylinder in the center of the weapon holds 5 shots, and each attack drains 1 charge from an attached vril battery. It takes an action to load 5 new shots into the cylinder.

DISRUPTOR

A bulky, rifle-like weapon with ornate copper and orichalcum filigree. When connected to a charged vril battery, the disruptor hums softly, and the thick barrel flashes with faint white arcs of energy. Firing the weapon produces an incandescent white beam that disintegrates solid material. The disruptor

deals double damage to objects and structures. Each attack drains 2 charges from the attached vril battery.

FERROMAGNETIC PROJECTILES

Round balls crafted with a secret formula of specially charged iron. The projectiles react to the magnetic fields created by coil rifles and revolvers and are propelled at high speed when fired.

POWERED WEAPON

These melee weapons incorporate orichalcum filigree and discs into their blades or heads with terminals for vril battery connections. You can activate or deactivate a powered weapon you're holding as a bonus action. When you hit a creature with an active powered weapon, the creature must succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC equal to 8 + the ability modifier you used for the weapon's attack + your proficiency bonus) or fall prone. Each hit drains 2 charges from the vril battery.

ANKESHELIAN WEAPONS

ARMOR	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
<i>Melee Weapons</i>				
Charged weapon	+500 gp	as base weapon plus 1d8 lightning	as base weapon plus 1 lb.	charged
Powered weapon	+1,000 gp	As base weapon	as base weapon plus 2 lb.	powered
<i>Ranged Weapons</i>				
Coil revolver	5,000 gp	1d10 piercing	5 lb.	ammunition (range 30/90), special
Disruptor	8,000 gp	2d8 force	10 lb.	range 100/300, special, two-handed
<i>Ammunition</i>				
Ferromagnetic projectiles (10)	10 gp	—	—	—

MIDSUMMER FAIR CLOCKWORK COMPANIONS

by Greg Marks

The Zobeck Midsummer Fair is a time of wonder, a place where one can find little pieces of joy hidden between the finest silks and ostentatious jewelry of exotic craftsmanship. There is no place like the Crossroads City when the trade fair comes. Amidst all its many wonders, the true prizes are made of clockwork. Booths hawk wares from independent craftsman, the Arcane Collegium, House Greymark, the Geargrinder's Emporium, and even kobolds from the Kobold Ghetto. So much can be found, they say you can't see it all. Walk around and try!

Cisnac's Confounding Clockwork Creatures

Rumors say that Cisnac Cligiglam failed out of the Arcane Collegium where he learned the basics of clockwork magic. Other whispers say that the gnome is truly mad and made an infernal pact for his creativity. Whatever the case, this diminutive phenomenon has one of the most eye-catching tents at the Midsummer Fair. A cacophony of ticking gears and ringing bells pours out onto the street from a tent covered in colorful pennants and ribbons, fluttering in the breeze. A customer brave enough or curious enough to enter finds a

collection of clockwork creatures for sale that boggles the mind. In addition to many more commonly seen clockwork creations, Cisnac has created several truly unique specimens.

All of Cisnac's creations come with the option of bonding the clockwork to the purchaser or having it take orders from anyone holding a particular rod branded with Cisnac's likeness and a code specific to that clockwork. This bonding is blessed by a priest of Rava and is said to be unbreakable.

ASSASSIN SNAKE

Price: 200 gp

Despite its name, Cisnac markets this clockwork solely as a pest control option. The assassin snake can eliminate nuisance pests by crawling through your house's walls or deep into rodent burrows infesting your garden. It is strictly NOT for use against humanoids, pets, livestock, or other beings.

To avoid legal problems, Cisnac only sells one use of poison preloaded into the assassin snake and directs the buyer to visit an appropriately licensed dealer for their pest control needs when considering reloads. For an extra 50 gp, he will supply a set of tinker's tools needed to reload the clockwork, or he is willing to do the labor himself at his store located in the Gear District for the low price of 5 gp.

ASSASSIN SNAKE

Tiny construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d4 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands one language (usually Common) but cannot speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Immutable Form. The assassin snake is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Reservoir. The assassin snake is capable of carrying only one dose of poison, and once expended, the poison must be reloaded, a process that requires tinker's tools and at least 1 minute.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (3d4) poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

CLOCKWORK GARDENER

Price: 150 gp

The clockwork gardener's bronze trunk and copper leaves help it blend into the owner's decorative gardens while it quietly works. The clockwork gardener is a boon to anyone with large grounds that need constant maintenance. It can plant seeds, trim grass with scythe-like blades stored internally, or even water the plants from a spigot hidden among its branches. The construct also comes equipped

with a 3-ft.-by-3-ft. internal storage locker in its trunk where gardening staff can store tools or other supplies. As an added bonus, it can even provide shade on a warm day.

CLOCKWORK GARDENER

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (7d10 + 7)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands one language (usually Common) but cannot speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Immutable Form. The clockwork gardener is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Water Hose. The clockwork gardener can forcefully spray water in a powerful 60-ft. jet to drive away pets or a 30-ft. cone that creates a gentle drizzle suitable for watering plants or extinguishing exposed flames in the area.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clockwork gardener makes three attacks: two with its scything blades and one with its slam.

Scything Blades. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Water Jet. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

CLOCKWORK GUARDIAN

Price: 1,500 gp

One of Cisnac's most novel creations is the clockwork guardian: a clockwork creature that you wear. The clockwork guardian appears to be a baroque set of steel half plate, and while it is inactive, it gives the wearer all the benefits and disadvantages of wearing that armor. However, as a bonus action, the wearer can order the clockwork guardian to attack a target. It then disengages from the wearer and transforms into humanoid clockwork warrior capable of defending its owner.

CLOCKWORK GUARDIAN

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 31 (7d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)

Skills Athletics +3, Perception +3

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands one language (usually Common) but cannot speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

False Appearance. While worn, the clockwork guardian remains motionless. It is indistinguishable from a suit of half plate and can take no actions. It takes the clockwork guardian an action to disengage from its wearer or to reform into a suit of half plate that can be worn.

Immutable Form. The clockwork guardian is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The clockwork guardian has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. It does not impart this ability to its wearer.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clockwork guardian makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Parry. The clockwork guardian adds 4 to the AC of an adjacent creature against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the clockwork guardian must be able to see the attacker.

WATCH OWL

Price: 150 gp

One of Cisnac's most popular clockworks is the watch owl, a construct capable of watching over an area and alerting you to trespassers. It can be set to make gentle hooting noises, screech loudly, or mentally alert the owner when detecting trespassers. These clockwork owls are available in silver, gold, or (for an additional 15 gp charge) painted to look like a natural owl.

WATCH OWL

Tiny construct, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 5 (2d4)

Speed 5 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands one language (usually Common) but cannot speak

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Flyby. The watch owl doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Immutable Form. The watch owl is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Innate Spellcasting (1/day). The watch owl can innately cast *alarm*, requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.



Keen Hearing and Sight. The watch owl has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

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

ACTIONS

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

The Collective

In an out-of-the-way corner of the fair sits a patch-covered tent with a hand-scrawled sign that reads “*Repairs Quick-Quick!*” A kobold sits behind a counter that is little more than a board balanced on two barrels. The kobold, working on various clockwork

components, pays no mind to passersby unless they approach him. This tent is the home of a group of five kobolds calling themselves the Collective, and what they have to offer is truly unique. The Collective does not make clockwork constructs, but rather, they modify them. For the right price, paid upfront, they can make a number of changes or improvements, not all of which are strictly legal. Interested parties are taken inside, so negotiations can happen out of public view as the Collective displays what it has for sale only for the right kind of customer.

All modifications are made to order and take 3d6 days to complete, during which time the clockwork to be modified must be present to be worked on, except as noted.

ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Price: 500 gp

Opening up the clockwork and installing several additional large gears, the Collective can install the ability for your clockwork to understand a second language. These gears are hard to come by and are usually not available for rare languages (GM discretion). Addition of the language gears requires an expansion of the clockwork controlling the construct and leaves an unsightly bulge in its head. This modification only grants the ability to understand the second language. The clockwork still cannot speak.

ARMOR

Price: 150 gp

It’s not pretty, but the Collective can bolt plates of iron onto your construct, increasing your clockwork’s armor class by 1. Unfortunately, the metal plates are heavy and awkward. They decrease the speed of your construct by 10 feet, and it suffers disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

This modification cannot be added to the clockwork guardian and is mutually exclusive with the speed boost modification.

COUNTERFEIT CONTROL ROD

Price: 1,500 gp

The Collective has copies of Cisnac Cligiglam's designs and can forge new control rods for any of his creations. These rods allow another user to give the specified clockwork commands. This is highly illegal and thus expensive. This modification does not require the presence of the clockwork to be created.

At the GM's discretion, the control rods are imperfect and have a 25% chance of failing, causing the creature to go berserk and attack the wielder of the false control rod.

CHEMICAL RESERVOIR

Price: 500 gp

Kobolds are cunning strategists and no strangers to adding a little spice to their creations. This modification causes the clockwork to inject or excrete a substance upon making a successful attack. This is most commonly used to affect the target with poison as most other alchemical substances would also damage the clockwork. However, the Collective isn't picky. If you want to squirt acid or alchemist's fire all over your clockwork in an effort to get your enemy as well, that's your business. They make sure the reservoir is resistant to alchemical reactions, though there are no guarantees about the integrity of your clockwork once it is released. This reservoir holds only one dose, and reloading it requires tools and at least 1 minute.

The expanded reservoir modification cannot be combined with the hidden compartment modification and cannot be added to the assassin snake as it already has one.

EXPANDED RESERVOIR

Price: 250 gp

Taking advantage of the ability to pack tanks within empty space in the construct, the Collective increases the number of doses of poison or alchemical substance that a clockwork can store. The storage tank size

varies with the size of the clockwork (see below). Note that the modification is a single tank, so the doses must all be of the same poison or alchemical substance. Reloading the tank requires tools and at least 1 minute.

- **Tiny:** 2 doses
- **Small:** 3 doses
- **Medium:** 5 doses
- **Large:** 7 doses

HIDDEN COMPARTMENT

Price: 50 gp

The collective can install a hidden compartment in your clockwork. Locating the hidden compartment requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The hidden compartment modification cannot be combined with the chemical reservoir modification. The amount of space the compartment can hold varies with the size of the clockwork:

- **Tiny:** folded map, ring, lock picks
- **Small:** dagger, potion vial, scroll tube
- **Medium:** shortsword, quiver of arrows
- **Large:** longsword, full backpack

RECOUNTING CRYSTAL

Price: 750 gp

Using a small blue crystal, usually in the forehead for constructs that have heads, the clockwork can record up to 1 hour of what it sees. The owner can then trigger the crystal to project the recording as an illusion similar to a *silent image*. Note that the recording is completely visual, there is no sound, and the crystal can only recount that which could be detected with normal vision. The magical recording can be deleted or saved within the crystal after watching. The recounting crystal can only retain one recording at a time.

SPEED BOOST

Price: 150 gp

By removing some of the armor plating covering your construct and tightening its springs to dangerous levels, the Collective can increase the speed of your construct by 10 feet. Unfortunately, your construct's AC is lowered by 1 in the process.

This modification is mutually exclusive with the armor modification.

Arcane Collegium Student Bazaar!

For the first time ever, Collegium Guildmaster Orlando has ordered that the apprentices in the School of Gear Magic display their projects to the public. This maze-like tent is filled with designs that range from laughable to amazing. Most are not available for sale, but having already been scored and returned to the students, a few of the coin-strapped apprentices are looking to turn their talents to profit, much to the dismay of the clerics of Rava and the Geargrinders Guild.

CLOCKWORK LANTERN

Price: 100 gp

Apprentices find themselves working at all hours and frequently need a good lamp. The clockwork lantern is an improvement on the standard lantern as it floats up to 10 feet off the ground and can follow the pace of an average student as they go about their chores. It can alter its wick on command to shed light in a radius from 5–30 feet, even dimming itself if ordered.

The creator of the clockwork lantern has accompanied his master on several expeditions into dangerous places, so the lantern also comes equipped with the ability to lob small tongues of fire short distances in order to discourage hungry predators. It can also be used to start campfires.

CLOCKWORK LANTERN

Tiny construct, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands one language (usually Common) but cannot speak

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Lantern's Light. The clockwork lantern can shed light from dim to bright in a radius of 5–30 feet on command.

Immutable Form. The clockwork lantern is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

ACTIONS

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

Lantern's Flame. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +2 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) fire damage.

CLOCKWORK TUTOR

Price: 1,000 gp

The clockwork tutor is the answer to any student's problems. This adaptive clockwork learns the way you learn and assists in teaching you any language or tool proficiency, decreasing the downtime days required to learn them by 25%. In addition, it is capable of casting a number of spells that can help any apprentice short of time.

The clockwork tutor looks like a Medium-sized humanoid made of tin and brass with full beard and dressed in comical wizard robes complete with pointed metal hat.

CLOCKWORK TUTOR

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +4, Int +5

Skills Arcana +5, History +5, Insight +2, Nature +5, Religion +5

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Adaptive Teaching. The clockwork tutor decreases the time required to learn a language or tool proficiency by 25%. To reap this decrease, the tutor must work with the student for at least 4 hours per day.

Immutable Form. The clockwork tutor is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Innate Spellcasting. The clockwork tutor's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *guidance, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, vicious mockery*

1/day each: *alarm, comprehend languages, goodberry, sleep*

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The clockwork tutor makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage.



TREASURES OF PERUN'S DAUGHTER

by Lysa Penrose

Of threatened by raiding centaurs, dragon legions, and the bandits of the Ruby Despotate, the Duchy of Perun's Daughter doesn't take kindly to outsiders too curious about what lies in Perunalia's vaults and armories—especially those who gawk at the duchy's leadership of powerful women. Societies dominated by men are dominated too by their rampant emotions: envy, greed, rage. Waging war to capture the coveted treasures of their neighbors seems ridiculous to the matriarchal Perunalian despite its common practice. They believe it's much more sensible to nurture a legacy of culture, education, and invention. This rare peek at Perunalia's bounty has been pieced together by accounts from the Crossroads's noble daughters who've attended Perunalia's academies and Zobeck merchants who've crossed paths with Perunalian traders.

Daughters of War and Thunder

Perunalia is ruled by the demigod Vasilka Soulay, the daughter of Perun, god of war and thunder. Although Vasilka is a woman of wisdom and learning, she is also a goddess of great courage, and Perunalia's warrior women—whether paladins of the Order of the White Lions or archers for whom Perunalia

is famed—are quite adept at defending the duchy. Their natural and trained skills are aided by masterfully crafted items and by relics discovered in Sephaya, the current capital city and former ancient city of the elves.

ANCIENT SEPHAYAN BOW

Weapon (longbow), uncommon

Perunalian historians believe these longbows uncovered in the trees of Sephaya were crafted by elves who lived in an ancient city on the same land. The wood does not match any found in the plentiful gardens of Perunalia's capitol city, and the true origins of these bows—flexible and light yet sturdy and strong—remains a mystery.

This longbow does not have the heavy property.

ARCH OF THE TEMPEST

Weapon (longbow), legendary, requires attunement

Some say the master bowyers of Perunalia gained the knowledge to craft these longbows as a gift from Perun himself. Others say the boldest women of Perunalia stared into the heart of the storm without fear and learned to harness its power themselves.

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit a target with the longbow, it takes an extra 3d6 thunder damage.

Righteous Lightning. The longbow has 3 charges. When you make a ranged attack roll with this weapon, you can expend a charge to cause a stroke of lightning 5 feet wide to blast after your arrow in a straight line ending at your target. Each creature in the line, including your target, must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 8d6 lightning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. The longbow regains all expended charges at dawn.

Avatar of the Storm. When the longbow is fully charged, its power manifests in a 10-foot-radius sphere around you, such as swirling winds or crackling dark clouds above you. When you are hit by a melee attack and the attacker is within this sphere, you can use your reaction to deal 3d6 lightning damage to the attacker.

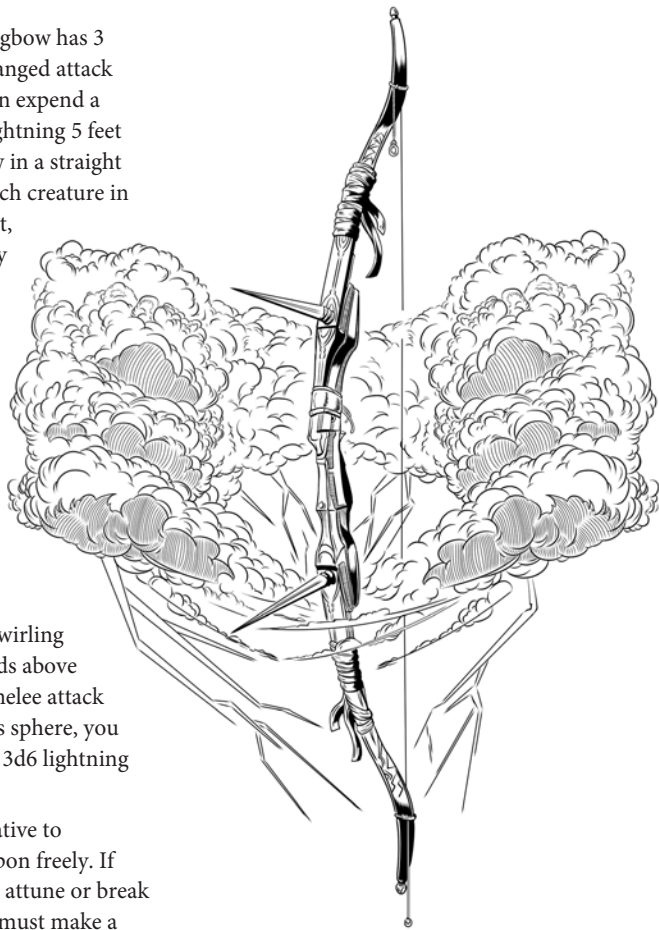
For Perunalia! Only those native to Perunalia can wield this weapon freely. If you are not native, when you attune or break attunement to this bow, you must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 100 (10d10 + 45) thunder damage or half as much damage on a success.

ARROW OF GRABBING

Weapon (arrow), very rare

This arrow has a barbed head and is wound with a fine but strong thread that unravels as the arrow soars. If a creature takes damage from the arrow, the creature must succeed a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 4d6 damage and have the arrowhead lodged in its flesh.

A creature grabbed by this arrow cannot move farther away from you. At the end of its turn, the creature can attempt a DC



17 Constitution saving throw, taking 4d6 piercing damage and dislodging the arrow on a success.

As an action, you can attempt to pull the grabbed creature up to 10 feet in a straight line toward you, forcing the creature to reattempt the saving throw. If the creature fails, you can move it.

ARROW OF UNPLEASANT HERBS

Weapon (arrow), rare

Perunalia is known for its botanists who use their skills to beautify the duchy's many gardens and to create healing and helpful potions and poultices. But their discovery

of more “unpleasant” herbs doesn’t go to waste. Handle these arrows carefully. Their arrowheads are rubbed with poisonous leaves.

If a creature takes damage from the arrow, it must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw against poison. On a failed save, the creature spends its next turn retching and reeling.

BLOODBOW

Weapon (longbow), rare (requires attunement)

A fresh *bloodbow* is carved of a light, sturdy wood such as hickory or yew, but to reach its full potential, a *bloodbow* must be stained in the blood of creatures it has slain. You’re more likely to see a *bloodbow* in a deep maroon hue, lacquered and aged under layers of sundried blood and sometimes embellished with dragonborn teeth, centaur tails, or other battle trophies. Perunalians use these weapons to make their enemies’ blood boil into madness.

Bloodbows affect creatures of the type with whose blood the weapon was last soaked. When you make a ranged attack roll with this magic weapon against a creature of that type, you have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. If the attack hits, your target must succeed a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become enraged until the end of your next turn. While enraged, the target suffers a short-term madness effect.

Bloodbows most commonly are soaked in the blood of bandits, dragonborn, and other humanoids. If you soak this weapon in the blood of a different creature type, the *bloodbow* immediately ceases to affect the previous type. The bow affects the new type after a long rest.

CLOAK OF THE WHITE LIONS

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

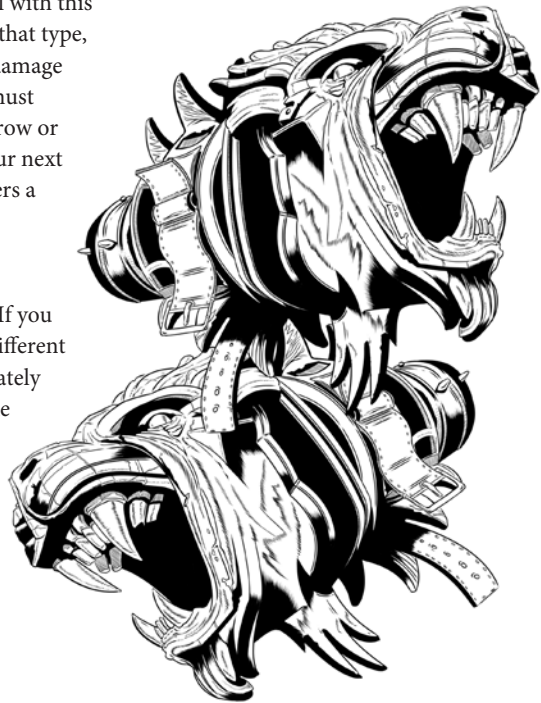
This cloak is woven with crisp white and shining silver threads to create the image of a roaring female lion’s head. While wearing this cloak, you have advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of your allies is within 5 feet of the creature and isn’t incapacitated.

While wearing the cloak, you can use your action to cast *polymorph* on yourself, transforming into a lion. While you are in the form of the lion, you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. The cloak can’t be used this way again until the next dawn.

GAUNTLETS OF THE WHITE LIONS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a paladin)

The female paladins of the Order of the White Lions defend their lands against the onslaught of warring men. These gauntlets—steel cast in the shape of lions’ heads and polished to a



nearly white gleam—strengthen their divine powers for this cause.

While you wear these gauntlets, when you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack and use your Divine Smite feature, the damage increases by 1d8 if the target is an evil humanoid, to a maximum of 6d8.

PERUNALIAN TRAINING BOW

Weapon (shortbow), uncommon

For girls in Perunalia, beginning one's archery training is a rite of passage at the age of 14. Families send their daughters to the best archery schools throughout the lands, and mothers traditionally gift their daughters' first bows and arrows at this age.

This bow has 5 charges. When you make a ranged attack roll with this weapon and miss the target, you can expend 1 charge and reroll the die. Alternatively, when you make a ranged attack roll with this weapon, you can expend 3 charges to forgo rolling the d20 to get a 13 on the die. The bow regains 1d4 charges daily at dawn.

PERUNALIAN TRAINING QUIVER

Wondrous item, uncommon

The wealthy families of Perunalia ensure their daughters are equipped with everything they need before sending them away to archery academies. In addition to holding your standard arrows, these *training quivers* have extra adventuring gear any young warrior might need.

As an action, you can reach into the quiver and request adventuring gear worth up to 50 gp. Roll 1d100. If you roll higher than the numerical value of the cost of that item, you find it in your quiver. For example, if an item costs 5 cp, you must roll 6 or higher. If an item costs 50 gp, you must roll 51 or higher. The quiver cannot be used in this way again until the next dawn.

Once you've pulled 5 items from the quiver, it becomes a non-magical quiver.

The Duchess's Fair

All of Perunalia's archers put their skills on display at this famous summer fair and tournament. Archers earn colorful feathers that are markers of their warrior rank. These have a single-use effect, after which they become mere decorations—more motivation for archers to return each year to earn new feathers.

CLOUD FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, uncommon

This *feather token* is shaped like a white cloud. You can use an action to step on the token, which expands into a 10-foot-diameter cloud that immediately begins to rise slowly to a height of 20 feet. Any creatures standing on the cloud rise with it. The cloud disappears after 10 minutes, and anything that was on the cloud falls slowly to the ground.

DARK OF THE MOON FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, rare

This feather token is shaped like a black moon. As an action, you can brush the feather over a willing creature's eyes to grant it the ability to see in the dark. For 1 hour, that creature has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet, including in magical darkness.

GRAND MAIDEN'S FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, legendary

The annual winner of the Duchess's Fair is deemed the Grand Maiden. This multi-colored *feather token* is shaped like the flag of Perunalia: a red flag with a roaring white lion and a blue thunderbolt. While carrying this token, you gain a +2 bonus to ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls.

As an action, you can choose one of the following effects:

- **Tear off a red feather.** You are immune to all damage for 10 minutes.
- **Tear off a white feather.** Allies within 30 feet of you regain hit points equal to half of their maximum hit points.

- **Tear off a blue feather.** Furious lightning and showers of arrows strike to the ground at four different points you can see within 1 mile. Each creature in a 40-foot-radius sphere centered on each point you choose must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 20d6 lightning damage and 20d6 piercing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

HELD HEART FEATHER TOKEN

Wondrous item, very rare

A Perunalian warrior bearing the red feather has mastered her weapon. This feather token is shaped like red heart held aloft by a hand. While carrying this token, your initiative rolls have advantage. As an action, you can press the feather against a willing creature. The target regains all its hit points.

A Center of Culture, Art, and Trade

Although Perunalians' mastery of war brings them renown, the women of Perunalia find more joy in the pursuit of education, the study of art, and the trade of their gentler bounties: fish and oysters, gardening, fine jewel work, and more. The merchants of Zobeck to the northwest speak highly of shrewd Perunalian traders and their wares.

BOOK SHROUD

Wondrous item, uncommon

They say there are two sides to every story, and hidden in the Perunalian Palatial Library's shelves, there are some books that prove this truer than ever. While browsing tomes of ancient lore, you might happen upon a book spine whose title seems to shift and shimmer. This book might be hiding its true knowledge beneath a *book shroud*.

When not bound to a book, this red leather cover is embossed with images of eyes on every inch of its surface. Once wrapped around a tome, it shifts the book's appearance to a plain red cover with a title of your choosing and blank pages on which you can write.

When viewing the wrapped book, other creatures see the plain red version with any contents you've written. A creature succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check sees the real book and can remove the shroud.

EARRINGS OF THE STORM OYSTER

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

When storms pass through Perunalia and lightning strikes the Argent River, Perunalia's fishers know to check for oysters washed ashore, for they might hold rare storm-touched pearls with a characteristic deep blue hue. Only the duchy's finest jewelers can afford to craft with such a coveted material, and rarely do they get ahold of more than one or two such pearls. As such, often these blue pearls are fashioned into earrings.

While wearing these earrings, you gain the following benefits:

- You have resistance to cold, lightning, and thunder damage.
- You can understand Primordial. When it is spoken, the pearls echo the words in a language you can understand, at a whisper only you can hear.
- You cannot be deafened.
- You can breathe air and water.
- Once per day, you can cast the spell *sleet storm* (DC 13). Once used, this property of the earrings can't be used again until the next dawn.

INSTRUMENT OF VASILKA'S BLESSING

*Wondrous item, legendary
(requires attunement by a bard)*

Although her father is the god of war and thunder, Vasilka takes after her human mother Illyena and spends her time in contemplation and study. She is a patroness of learning and the arts and holds bards in high esteem, hoping to entice more female bards to her capitol city Sephaya. Bards whose music moves Vasilka are gifted powerful instruments bestowed with her divine favor. A creature that attempts to play the instrument without being attuned to it with Vasilka's blessing must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 6d4 psychic damage.

One Woman Band. This item can transform into any musical instrument. As an action, you can transform the instrument into the form of any with which you are proficient.

Legendary Performer. While attuned to this instrument, you have advantage on Charisma (Performance) checks.

Vasilka's Divine Magic. You can use an action to play the instrument and cast one of its spells: *bless*, *calm emotions*, *control weather*, *death ward*, *guardian of faith*, *mass heal*, *sanctuary*. Once the instrument has been used to cast a spell, it can't be used to cast that spell again until the next dawn. The spells use your spellcasting ability and spell save DC.

LOOM OF FATE

Wondrous item, rare

Although many women who flee the Despotate or the Magdar Kingdom to the duchy's borders join Perunalia's army as soldiers, nearly as many find a livelihood as weavers. Beautiful woven cloth is one of Perunalia's chief exports. This portable frame loom is appropriate for adventurers with a taste for arts and crafts as well and offers insight into why Perunalia's fabric is so valued.

If you spend 1 hour weaving on this loom, roll 1d20 and record the number rolled. You can replace any attack roll, saving throw, or ability check, made by you or a creature that you can see, with this roll. You must choose to do so before the roll. The loom can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

Once you have used the loom 3 times, the fabric is complete, and the loom is no longer magical. The fabric becomes a shifting tapestry that represents your adventures those 3 days.

WHITE DANDELIONS

Wondrous item, common

These fluffy white flowers are the bane of many a Perunalian botanist as they seem to wage war against a carefully curated garden with the same efficacy of any Perunalian warrior. However, Perunalians also associate the flower with their protectors, the Order of the White Lions, and Perunalia's children gleefully blow on the flowers' seeds to spread their good omen, much to the botanist's chagrin.

Perhaps there is something to their reputation as protectors. As a reaction, you can choose for the *white dandelion* to explode in a flurry of seeds that distract your attacker, adding a +1 bonus immediately to a saving throw or to your armor class until the start of your next turn. Once it is used in this way, the remaining flower stem wilts.

11 MAGIC STAVES OF MIDGARD

by Marc Radle

Magical staves are among the most sought-after magic items for many spellcasters. In Midgard, there are a number of unique magical staves, many with rich histories and lore.

Spell Sources

While many magical staff spells are found in the SRD, those marked with an asterisk (*) appear in the Midgard *Heroes Handbook*.

CRYSTAL STAFF

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

A staff carved from a single piece of solid crystal, it has numerous reflective facets that produce a strangely hypnotic effect.

These strange magical staves were relatively common in the Valeran Empire before its fall and in Ankeshel during its golden age. Today, those few crystal staves that remain can be found almost anywhere in Midgard.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *color spray* (1 charge), *hypnotic pattern* (3 charges), *confound senses** (3 charges), *confusion* (4 charges), *jeweled fissure** (3 charge), *prismatic ray** (5 charges), or *prismatic spray* (7 charges).

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the crystal shatters, destroying the staff and dealing 2d6 piercing damage to anyone in a 10-foot radius.

SERPENT STAFF

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

Fashioned from twisted ash wood, this staff's head is carved in the realistic likeness of a serpent preparing to strike.

Serpent staves are often found in the hands of lamia sorcerers in Kush and Nuria Natal and among the serpent-scholars of Lignas.

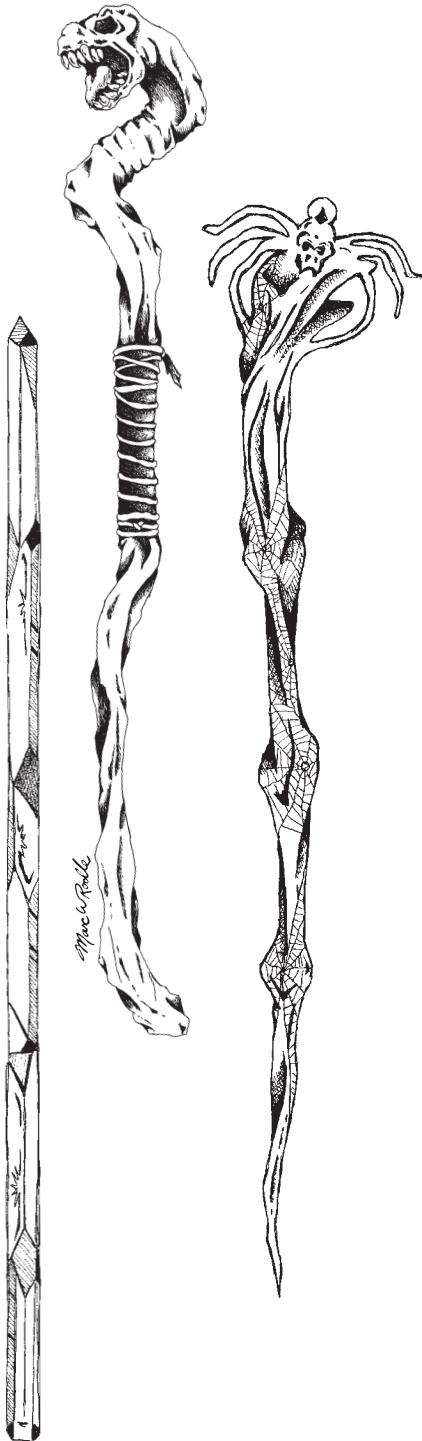
You have resistance to poison damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *poisoned volley** (2 charges), or *protection from poison* (2 charges).

Serpent form: You can use an action and expend 2 charges to assume the shape of a beast (snake only) that has a challenge rating of 2 or lower. You can remain in this form for up to 1 minute. You can revert to your normal form before then by using an action. Otherwise, treat as the druid's Wildshape ability.





The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the carved snake head twists and magically consumes the rest of the staff, immediately destroying it.

SPIDER STAFF

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

Delicate web-like designs are carved into the wood of this twisted staff, which is often topped with the carved likeness of a spider.

Said to have been created in the Southlands by mages loyal to the Spider Prophet, these magical staves are occasionally encountered in regions far from that windswept desert land.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *spider climb* (2 charges) or *web* \ (2 charges).

Spider Swarm: While holding the staff, you can use an action and expend 1 charge to cause a swarm of spiders to appear in a space that you can see within 60 feet. The swarm of spiders remains for 1 minute, until you dismiss it as an action, or until you move more than 100 feet away from it.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, a swarm of spiders appears and consumes the staff and then vanishes.

STAFF OF BINDING

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

Made from stout oak with steel bands and bits of chain running its entire length, the staff feels oddly heavy.

First known in the magocracies before the collapse, there are still a few of these staves in Bemmea and Bourgund today.

This staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *arcane lock* (2 charges), *hold monster* (5 charges), *hold person* (2 charges), *lock armor** (2 charge), or *planar binding* (5 charges).

Unbound: While holding the staff, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge and gain advantage on a saving throw you make to avoid being paralyzed or restrained.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff constricts in upon itself and is destroyed.

STAFF OF SCRYING

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

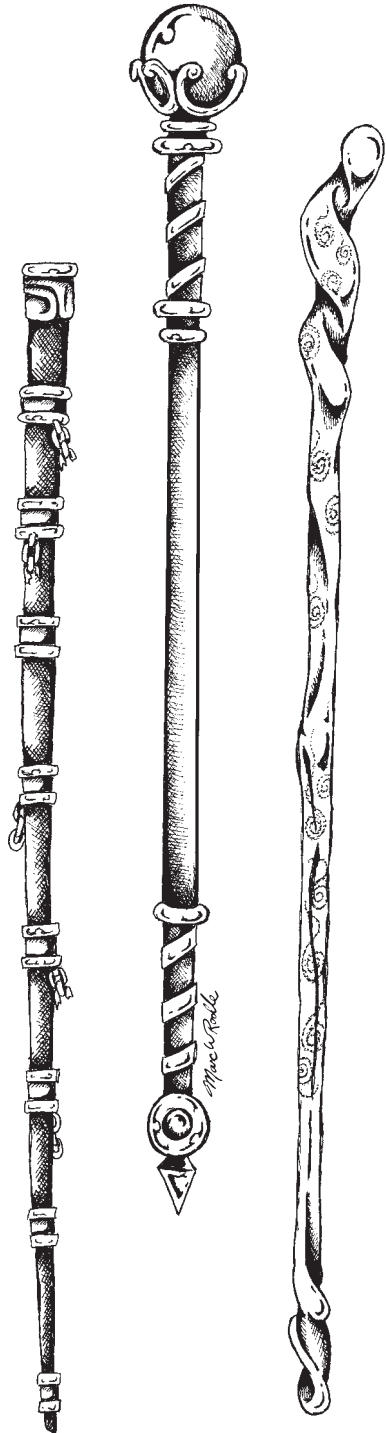
This is a graceful, highly polished wooden staff crafted from willow. A crystal ball tops the staff, and smooth gold bands twist around its shaft.

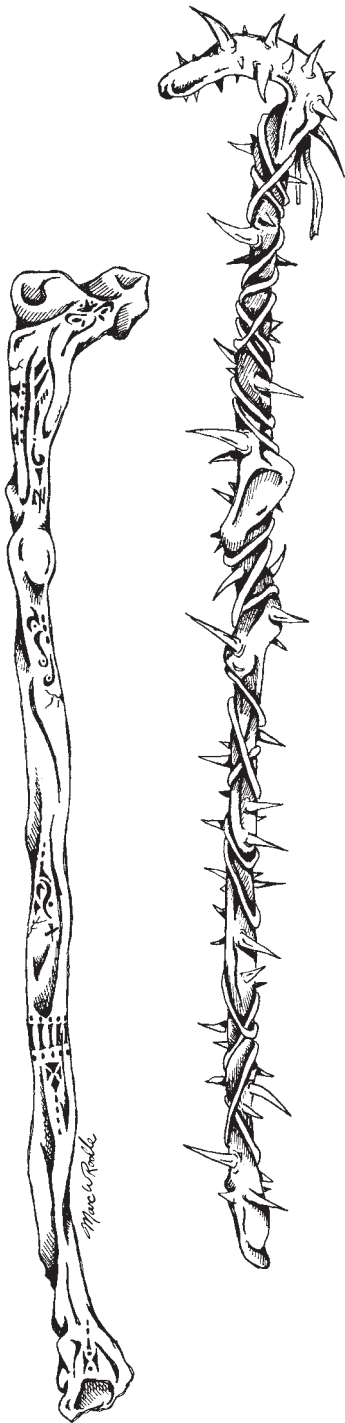
The first known reports of these staves come from the courts of the Grand Duchy and the Seven Cities, especially Friula, Triolo and Capleon, but they can now be found in almost every part of Midgard.

This staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *detect thoughts* (2 charges), *locate creature* (4 charges), *locate object* (2 charges), *scrying* (5 charges), *true seeing* (6 charges).

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, a bright flash of light erupts from the crystal ball and the staff vanishes.





STAFF OF THE FOUR WINDS

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

Made of gently twisting ash and engraved with spiraling runes, the staff feels strangely lighter than its size would otherwise suggest.

First created in Kel Azjer, a secluded mountaintop city in the Southlands region known as the Dominion of the Wind Lords, these staves can be found throughout most of Midgard due to the network of magical Red Portals located within the city.

This staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *circle of wind** (1 charge), *feather fall* (1 charge), *gust of wind* (2 charges), *Perun's doom** (3 charges), *wind wall* (3 charges), *wind walk* (6 charges), *wind tunnel** (1 charge), or *wresting wind** (2 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *wind lash** cantrip from the staff without expending any charges.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff crumbles into ashes and is taken away with the breeze.

STAFF OF THE WHITE NECROMANCER

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a cleric, sorcerer, or wizard of a non-evil alignment)

Crafted from polished bone, this strange staff is carved with numerous arcane symbols and mystical runes.

These rare and powerful staves originate from the gravebinders of Siwal in the Southlands, though they have been reported in the possession of powerful white necromancers as far away as Valera and Trombei.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *false life* (1 charge), *gentle*

riposte (2 charges), *heartstop** (2 charges), *death ward* (4 charges), *raise dead* (5 charges), *revivify* (3 charges), *shared sacrifice** (2 charges), *speak with dead* (3 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *bless the dead** cantrip from the staff without using any charges.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the bone staff immediately crumbles to dust.

STAFF OF THORNS

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This gnarled and twisted oak staff has numerous thorns growing from its surface. Green vines tightly wind their way up along the shaft.

The origin of these staves is unknown, though many say that the first such staves came from the druids of Verrayne.

The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend up to 3 of its charges. For each charge you expend, the target takes an extra 1d6 piercing damage.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *barkskin* (2 charges), *entangle* (1 charge), *speak with plants* (3 charge), *spike growth* (2 charge), *vine trestle** (2 charges), or *wall of thorns* (6 charges)

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the thorns immediately fall from the staff and it becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.

STAFF OF WINTER AND ICE

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

This pure white, pine staff is topped with an ornately faceted shard of ice. The entire staff is cold to the touch.

Crafted in the Northlands, there were once many of these staves. Now, there are only five known to exist. One is rumored to lie somewhere in the great ice castle of the frost giant jarl, Holgi the Grim; another is said to be in the possession of the trollkin sorcerer Uraag the White; a third staff was last seen among the hoard of the fearsome white dragon Gelidaxis; the whereabouts of the remaining two are not currently known.

You have resistance to cold damage while you hold this staff.

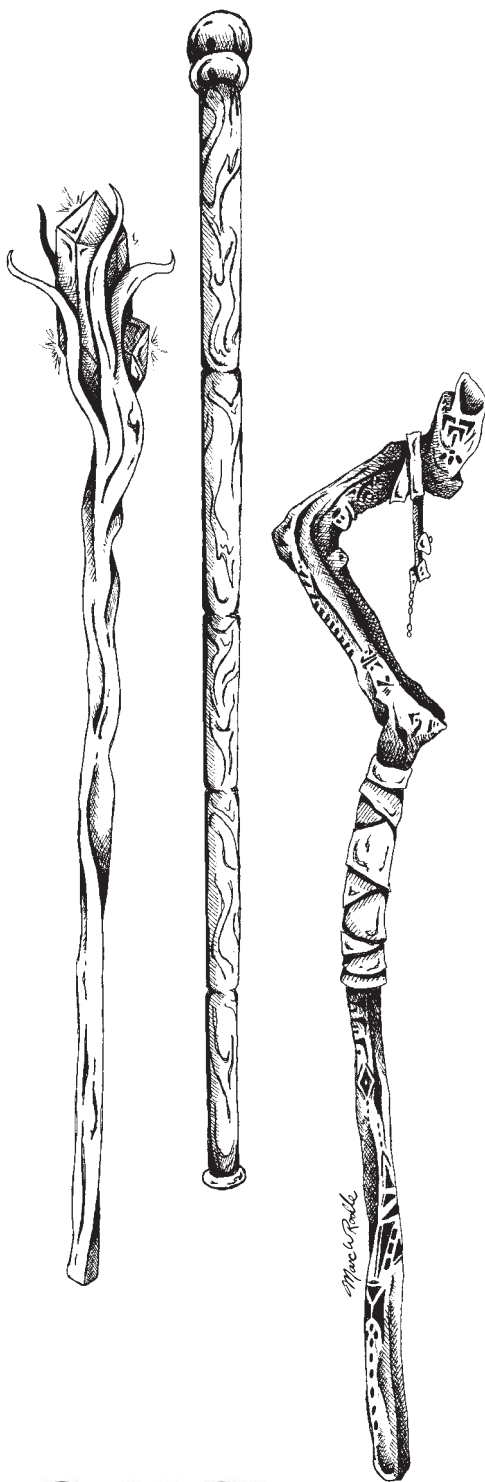
The staff has 20 charges

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *Boreas's breath** (2 charges), *curse of Boreas** (6 charges), *ice storm* (4 charges), *flurry** (1 charge), *freezing fog** (3 charges), *frostbite** (5 charges), *frozen razors** (3 charges), *gliding step** (1 charge), *sleet storm* (3 charges), *wall of ice* (6 charges), *cone of cold* (5 charges), *freezing sphere* (6 charges), *snow boulder** (4 charges), *triumph of ice** (7 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *chill touch* or *ray of frost* cantrips from the staff without using any charges.

Retributive Strike: You can use an action to break the staff over your knee or against a solid surface, performing a retributive strike. The staff is destroyed and releases its remaining magic in an explosion that expands to fill a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on it.

You have a 50 percent chance to instantly travel to a random plane of existence, avoiding the explosion. If you fail to avoid the effect, you take cold damage equal to 16 × the number of charges in the staff.



Every other creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes an amount of cold damage based on how far away it is from the point of origin as shown in the following table. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.

DISTANCE FROM ORIGIN	DAMAGE
10 ft. away or closer	8 × the number of charges in the staff
11–20 ft. away	6 × the number of charges in the staff
21–30 ft. away	4 × the number of charges in the staff

The staff regains 2d8 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its resistance to cold damage but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains 1d8 + 2 charges.

STONE STAFF

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

Sturdy and smooth, this impressive staff is crafted from solid stone. Most stone staves are crafted by dwarf mages and few ever find their way into non-dwarven hands.

The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

The staff has 10 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *earthskimmer** (4 charges), *entomb** (6 charges), *flesh to stone* (6 charges), *meld into stone* (3 charges), *spire of stone** (2 charges), *stone shape* (4 charges), *stone skin* (4 charges), or *wall of stone* (5 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *pummelstone** cantrip from the staff without using any charges.

The staff regains 1d6 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge,

roll a d20. On a 1, hundreds of cracks appear across the staff's surface and it crumbles into tiny bits of stone.

UMBRAL STAFF

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

Made of twisted darkwood and covered in complex runes and sigils, this powerful and sought-after staff seems to emanate darkness.

There have only been three umbral staffs known in the world. Rergrath the Red, a powerful centaur warlock of the Rothenian Plain possesses one; a shadowmancer known only as *The Night That Walks* is said to have one; the last is said to be lost somewhere in the fallen magocracies of the Western Wastes.

You have resistance to radiant damage while you hold this staff.

The staff has 20 charges.

Spells: While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: *become nightwing** (6 charges), *black hand** (4 charges), *black ribbons** (1 charge), *black well** (6 charges), *cloying darkness** (1 charge), *cloak of shadow** (1 charge), *darkvision* (2 charges), *darkness* (2 charges), *dark dementing** (5 charges), *dark path** (2 charges), *darkbolt** (2 charges), *encroaching shadows** (6 charges), *night terrors** (4 charges), *shadow armor** (1 charge), *shadow hands** (1 charge), *shadow puppets** (2 charges), or *slither** (2 charges).

You can also use an action to cast the *claws of darkness**, *shadow blindness**, or *douse light** cantrips from the staff without using any charges.

Retributive Strike: You can use an action to break the staff over your knee or against a solid surface, performing a retributive strike. The staff is destroyed and releases its remaining magic in an explosion of darkness (as the darkness spell) that expands to fill a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on it.

You have a 50 percent chance to instantly travel to the Plane of Shadow, avoiding the explosion. If you fail to avoid the effect, you take force damage equal to $16 \times$ the number of charges in the staff.

Every other creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes an amount of damage based on how far away it is from the point of origin as shown in the following table. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.

DISTANCE FROM ORIGIN	DAMAGE
10 ft. away or closer	$8 \times$ the number of charges in the staff
11–20 ft. away	$6 \times$ the number of charges in the staff
21–30 ft. away	$4 \times$ the number of charges in the staff

The staff regains $2d8 + 4$ expended charges daily at midnight. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its ability to cast the *claws of darkness**, *shadow blindness**, or *douse light** cantrips but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains $1d8 + 2$ charges.



RANDOM TREASURE

STAFF	% ROLL
Crystal Staff	01–11
Serpent Staff	12–23
Spider Staff	24–35
Staff of Binding	36–45
Staff of the Four Winds	46–53
Staff of Scrying	54–63
Staff of Thorns	64–73
Staff of the White Necromancer	74–85
Staff of Winter and Ice	86–87
Stone Staff	88–98
Umbral Staff	99–00

LOST COMBAT SPELLS AND WAR MAGIC'S OF THE RED WASTES

by Brian Suskind

Two hundred years of war between the Mharoti Empire and Great Khandaria destroyed the fair country of Sindhu. Rivers of blood spilled from the clash of armies, titanic detonations of alchemical munitions, and arcane corruption from all manner of spells transformed this once fertile land into the Red Wastes. Yet among the hastily buried corpses, shattered skeletons of siege engines, and forgotten encampments, great plunder and lost arcana await the bold or foolish.

New Spells

The urgency of war brings about efficiency and creativity in all things. This includes the development of magic.

BARD SPELLS

3RD LEVEL

Expeditious Attack (enchantment)

6TH LEVEL

Chain Counterspell (abjuration)

CLERIC SPELLS

2ND LEVEL

Blessings of the Animal Lords (transmutation)

3RD LEVEL

Expeditious Attack (enchantment)

6TH LEVEL

Chain Counterspell (abjuration)

DRUID SPELLS

2ND LEVEL

Blessings of the Animal Lords (transmutation)

Caustic Sphere (conjunction)

3RD LEVEL

Expeditious Attack (enchantment)

4TH LEVEL

Burning Cyclone (evocation)

RANGER SPELLS

2ND LEVEL

Blessings of the Animal Lords (transmutation)

WARLOCK SPELLS

1ST LEVEL

Alchemical Geyser (evocation)

2ND LEVEL

Caustic Sphere (conjunction)

3RD LEVEL

Expeditious Attack (enchantment)

6TH LEVEL

Chain Counterspell (abjuration)

WIZARD/SORCERER SPELLS

1ST LEVEL

Alchemical Geyser (evocation)

2ND LEVEL

Caustic Sphere (conjuration)

3RD LEVEL

Expeditious Attack (enchantment)

4TH LEVEL

Burning Cyclone (evocation)

6TH LEVEL

Chain Counterspell (abjuration)

Spell Descriptions

Spells are presented in alphabetical order.

ALCHEMICAL GEYSER

1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a dilution of alchemist's fire in a vial)

Duration: Instantaneous

With a tremendous explosion, a fountain of alchemist's fire erupts from a chosen point within range. Every creature in a 10-foot radius centered on that point must make a Dexterity saving throw. A target takes 1d4 fire damage on a failed save and half as much on a successful one.

A creature who fails its saving throw takes an additional 1d4 fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end the ongoing fire damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you create one additional geyser for each slot level above 1st. Overlapping damage from different geysers do not stack.

BLESSINGS OF THE ANIMAL LORDS

2nd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a pinch of fur and feathers tied with silk cord)

Duration: 8 hours or until dispelled or triggered

Channeling the power of the Animal Lords, you trace a glyph onto a willing creature that bestows a specific blessing. When you cast this spell, you choose which Animal Lord symbol the target creature receives. The symbol is nearly invisible and requires a successful Intelligence (Investigation) check against your spell save DC to be found.

The target of your spell can activate the glyph as an action or reaction depending on the type of Animal Lord chosen. A creature can possess only one glyph on its body at a time. When 8 hours have passed or a glyph is triggered, the spell immediately ends.

- **Bat King:** *Keen Hearing* [Action]. You gain advantage on your next Wisdom (Perception) check that relies on hearing.
- **Brother Ox:** *Deflect Missile* [Reaction]. When struck by a ranged weapon attack, you can reduce the damage by 1d10 + your spellcasting ability modifier + your proficiency bonus.
- **Lord of Vultures:** *Winged Reposition* [Action]. On your next movement, you can fly up to 60 feet without provoking opportunity attacks.

- **Monkey King:** *Drunken Dodge* [Reaction]. When you are struck by a melee weapon attack, you gain resistance against that type of attack until your next turn.
- **Mouse King:** *Keen Sight* [Action]. You gain advantage on your next Wisdom (Perception) check that relies on sight
- **Queen of Birds:** *Parry* [Reaction]. You can add 5 to your AC against one melee weapon attack that would hit you, provided that you can see the attacker and you are wielding a melee weapon.
- **Queen of Cats:** *Agile Leap* [Action]. On your next movement, you can move up to your speed, jumping or climbing over obstacles, and ignore extra movement from difficult terrain.
- **Queen of Serpents:** *Ophidian Fortitude* [Reaction]. You gain advantage on your next saving throw against poison.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can inscribe another glyph on a different willing creature for each slot level above 3rd.

BURNING CYCLONE

4th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a small piece of red dragon scale)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Invoking the draconic mastery over fire and the sky, a whirling cyclone of wind and flame covering a 10-foot cube erupts at a chosen point within range. Each creature in the area must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 5d8 fire damage or half as much on a successful one.

A creature takes the same damage when it enters the cyclone for the first time on a turn or if it ends its turn there.

Upon casting the spell and at the beginning of its turn, each creature adjacent to the 10-

foot cube must make a Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the high winds of the vortex pull the creature 5 feet toward the center of the cyclone.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, you can create one additional cyclone for each slot level above 4th. Damage from overlapping cyclones do not stack.

CAUSTIC SPHERE

2nd-Level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a pinch of powdered alum, niter, and sulfate)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

A glowing green orb flashes from your hand to a chosen point within range for the duration. When the spell ends, either because your concentration is broken or because you decide to end it, the orb ruptures into a cloud of acid. Each creature in a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 2d6 acid damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

If at the end of your turn the orb has not yet ruptured, the damage increases by 1d6 (maximum 1d6 per caster level).

If a creature enters a square adjacent to the greenish orb or touches it, the creature must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the spell ends immediately, causing that orb to rupture.

On a successful save, the creature can pick up and throw the orb up to 40 feet. When it strikes a creature or a solid object, that orb immediately ruptures.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you create one additional orb for each slot level above 2nd. You can choose to trigger individual orbs to rupture.



CHAIN COUNTERSPELL

6th-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 reaction which you take when you see a creature within 60 feet of you casting a spell (see text)

Range: 60 feet

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous (see text)

You attempt to interrupt a creature in the process of casting a spell, and if successful, you can chain additional counterspell attempts for the rest of the round. If the target creature is casting a spell of 3rd level or lower, its spell fails and has no effect. If it is casting a spell of 4th level or higher, make an ability check using your spellcasting ability (DC 10 + the spell's level). On a success, the creature's spell fails and has no effect.

As a bonus reaction until the beginning of your next turn, you can attempt to counterspell any creature you can see casting a spell within 60 feet of you. Regardless of the level of spell the creature is casting, you must make an ability check using your spellcasting ability (DC 10 + the spell's level). On a success, the creature's spell fails and has no effect.

As long as you continue to make successful ability checks, you may continue to use bonus reactions to counterspell. If you fail one of these ability checks, this spell ends.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th level or higher, the DC for the additional counterspell attempts is reduced by 1 for each slot level above 6th.

EXPEDITIOUS ATTACK

3rd-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 reaction which you take when an ally within range makes a successful attack

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

When you witness an ally's successful attack, you can use a reaction to give that ally an immediate bonus attack with a -2 penalty to the attack roll.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the ally gains another bonus attack for each slot level above 3rd. However, each bonus attack after the first adds a cumulative -1 to the attack roll penalty (that is, -3 for 2nd bonus attack, -4 for 3rd, -5 for 4th, and so on).

Equipment

Your efficacy as a soldier is dependent upon the quality of your gear.

KHANDARIAN ELEMENTAL BOTTLES

As an action, you can throw one of these bottles up to 20 feet. Shattering on impact, the alchemical liquid inside causes a specific type of damage. Make a ranged attack against a creature or object, treating the bottle as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target takes damage (and any additional effect), according to the type of liquid (see chart below).

BOTTLE	DAMAGE	COST
Acid	2d6 acid damage (as acid vial).	25 gp
Cold	1d4 cold damage, and target's speed is halved until it uses an action to succeed at a DC 10 Constitution check.	50 gp
Fire	1d4 fire damage (as alchemist's fire).	50 gp
Lightning	1d6 lightning damage and target must succeed at a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for one turn.	100 gp
Poison	Target must succeed at a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1d4 poison damage.	100 gp
Thunder	1d4 thunder damage and target is deafened until it uses an action to succeed at a DC 10 Constitution saving throw.	50 gp

Magic Items

The glowing sword buried in a hastily dug grave. The overlooked chest from a raided supply caravan. A scroll tube still clutched in a dead wizard's hand. All of these and more await in the Red Wastes for the canny thief or opportunistic adventurer.

ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

The magic items are presented in alphabetical order.

ANOINTING MACE

Weapon (maul), uncommon (requires attunement)

Also called an anointing gada, you gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage with this Khandarian magic weapon. In addition, the ornately decorated head of the mace is perforated with small holes, and within is a reservoir for liquid. As a bonus action, you can activate the item, so a successful melee attack deals normal damage and causes the target to suffer the effects of the stored liquid (such as alchemist's fire).

Activating this feature uses up the liquid regardless of the success or failure of the attack. You can use an action to load a new liquid into the *anointing mace*.

BALEFUL WARDRUMS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

You must be proficient with percussion instruments to use these drums. The drums have 3 charges. If you play the drums as an action, you can use one charge to force all foes within 60 feet to succeed at a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain disadvantage on their next weapon or spell attack. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw is immune to the effects of this drum for 24 hours. The drum regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

BANNER OF THE FORTUNATE

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

While holding this banner aloft with one hand, you can use an action to grant any ally who can see you, within 60 feet at the moment of activation, advantage on their next attack. The banner cannot be used this way again until the next dawn.

FARHEALING BANDAGES

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a cleric, druid, or paladin)

You can use an action to wrap these white linen bandages around the appendage of a creature. Anytime during the next hour, you can use an action to activate the bandages to heal 1d6+3 hit points of damage. The creature must be within 60 feet of you when you activate the bandages.

Once activated, the bandages cannot be used again in this way until the next dawn. You can only have one *farhealing bandage* attuned at a time.

LODESTONE CALTROPS

Wondrous item, uncommon

As an action, you can spread a bag of twenty magically magnetic caltrops to cover a square area that is 5 feet on a side. Any creature that enters the area wearing metal armor or carrying metal items must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or stop moving this turn. A creature who begins its turn in the area can attempt another saving throw to leave or drop its metal objects.

LUCKY CHARM OF THE MONKEY KING

Wondrous item, common (requires attunement)

This tiny stone statue of a grinning monkey holds a leather loop in its paws, so the charm can be hung from a belt or pouch. While you are attuned to the *lucky charm*, you can use a bonus action to grant yourself a +1 bonus to your next die roll. The charm cannot be used

again this way until the next dawn. You can only be attuned to one *lucky charm* at a time.

RELOCATION CABLE

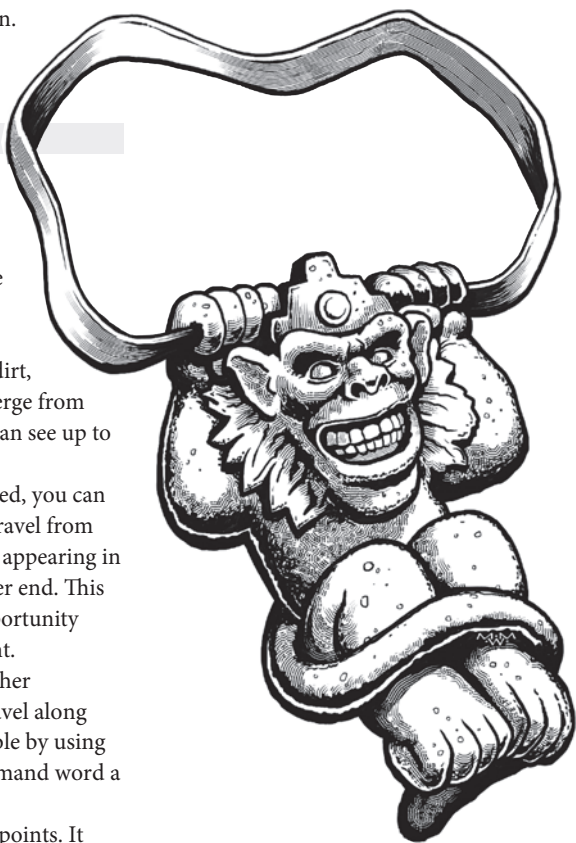
Wondrous item, uncommon

This 60-foot length of fine wire cable weighs 2 pounds. If you hold one end of the cable and use an action to speak its command word, the other end plunges into the ground, burrowing through dirt, sand, and similar material to emerge from the ground at a destination you can see up to its maximum length away.

On the same turn as it is activated, you can use a bonus action to magically travel from one end of the cable to the other, appearing in a free space adjacent to the further end. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks nor does it cost movement.

On subsequent turns, you or other creatures can use an action to travel along the cable. You can retract the cable by using a bonus action to speak the command word a second time.

The cable has AC 14 and 12 hit points. It regains 1 hit point every 5 minutes as long as it has at least 1 hit point. If the cable drops to 0 hit points, it is destroyed.



RESOLUTE BRACER

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This ornamental bracer features a reservoir capable of securely holding a liquid similar in size to a potion. While you are attuned to this item, you can use a bonus action to speak the command word and absorb the liquid as if you had consumed it. Liquid stored in the bracer for longer than 8 hours evaporates.

You can use an action to add a new potion or a liquid of similar size to the bracer.

COGS AND GEARS: THE AUTOMATA EPIDEMIC

by Greg Marks

My dearest Sillustria,

Patients with the strange metal-transforming disease I have spoken of in the past have been appearing at the hospital in greater frequency. I have been able to confirm that the strange rust covering the gearforged patient I went to see is indeed the same disease that infected my previous flesh and blood patients. How a mechanical body could so be infected by disease is still beyond me, but that is not the most troubling news.

While my patients in Longezza continue to languish, I have received word that their symptoms have worsened. One of the patients, a weaver, who just last week had only a few patches of rusty iron beneath the skin of her right arm, has now had her entire arm transformed into a rusty metal claw. The young boy who has the rust upon his face now has a functional metal eye. None of my reports of this rust have ever detailed such transformations. I worry something new has come.

*All my love,
Brimley*

The disease rust (see clockwork magic from *Deep Magic*) appeared years ago, covering gearforged with infectious rusty lesions that spread across their bodies. The infection has since leapt to flesh-and-blood patients, converting their limbs into rusty metal. Rumors abound as to the source of the disease: punishment from the Gear Goddess Rava, a diabolic bargain gone wrong, or even some form of possession. Whatever the truth of its origin, one thing is true—it has gotten worse.

Seven months ago saw a new version of the disease. Rust patients in Longezza and Zobeck have been reported with clockwork mutations. Not only has rusty metal formed

beneath their skin, but entire limbs have transformed to functional clockwork, if painfully so.

One of the leading researchers into rust is Dr. Brimley Angur of the Longezza Hospital. Dr. Angur has been traveling far and wide, documenting the disease, and in several cases has hired adventurers and other mercenaries to aid him on his travels. In his case notes and correspondence, the doctor refers to the warped form of the disease as calcesplasia, and that moniker has stuck.

Much of what we know about this new disease comes from Dr. Angur's notes. While mutations from calcesplasia are mostly found

around the site of the initial infection, the disease seems to be carried by the blood, so it is not uncommon to see patients with several limbs affected. So far, new symptoms have luckily only been found in flesh-and-blood patients. While gearforged and other constructs can be carriers of calcesplasia, there does not seem to be any harmful effects beyond rusty lesions.

Infection and Cure

Calcesplasia infection is similar to normal rust. Any creature injured by an infected construct must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or contract calcesplasia. Symptoms present 1d4 days later, beginning with an itchy rash around the site of the injury that rapidly progresses to skin and muscle necrosis and finally sloughing off to reveal the clockwork beneath within one day. Once infected, the victim only recovers half hit points from all natural and magical effects. The process of mutation is extremely painful and not all survive.

Every 24 hours after symptoms manifest, the victim may attempt a DC 15 Constitution saving throw to halt the progress of the disease. If the saving throw succeeds, the disease stops progressing, but all penalties and acquired mutations are permanent without magical intervention. If the saving throw fails, the infected creature loses 1 point of Dexterity, and they must repeat the saving throw after another 24 hours. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the infected acquires a calcesplasia mutation (see below). Whenever acquiring such a mutation, the victim must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose 1 point of Constitution.

Calcesplasia can be completely cured by *lesser restoration* or comparable magic if applied before any mutations are acquired. Lost Dexterity or Constitution can be restored by *greater restoration*, or once the disease is cured, it returns naturally at the rate of

1 point after each long rest. However, if mutations have occurred, the infected tissue must be removed before the disease can be cured. Calcesplasia-mutated limbs can be cleanly amputated with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, removing the affected limb and all of the infected tissue without killing the patient. A *regenerate* spell or more powerful magic is needed to regain use of the limb after amputation. At this time, no method short of *wish* has been found to return natural function of torso or head mutations, though the search for such a cure is rumored to be found somewhere on Ravatet, the Plane of Rusty Gears.

Dr. Brimley Angur, Case Note 566-0: I located a cleric of Rava named Shedio and convinced him to speak with me concerning calcesplasia. He is convinced that the worsening form of rust must be a punishment sent from his goddess to punish those that abuse technology. That seems unlikely, but I watched as the cleric's miracles healed those infected with rust, so maybe there's some truth to it? Of particular interest, Shedio told me a fable about a place called the Hall of Inevitable Fate, which supposedly exists on Ravatet, and about the Desert of Rust. If these places exist and the disease truly is divinely sent, maybe the answers I seek are there. I will need help getting there. Sillustria will not be pleased. This will be my most dangerous journey yet.

Calcesplasia Mutations

Once a patient contracts the mutated form of the disease, it does not take long before clockwork mechanisms begin sprouting from their flesh. This process is brutally painful, and the final conversion looks wholly unnatural.

To determine the location of an infection and mutations suffered, use the tables below. When rolling for location, if the result is an arm or leg, consider odd numbers to be the left side and even numbers to be on the right side.

TABLE A: INFECTION LOCATION

d6	LOCATION
1-2	Leg
3-4	Arm
5	Torso
6	Head

Calcesplasia and Rust Monsters

Victims of calcesplasia are especially susceptible to rust monsters and similar effects. Rust monsters are attracted to victims, like any other ferrous metal, and seem to take great glee in devouring infected clockwork limbs. Indeed, Dr. Angur has been considering experimenting with rust monsters as a safer method than amputation to remove infected tissue.

Calcesplasia victims suffer disadvantage to avoid being touched by a rust monster's antennae. If the saving throw fails and the rust monster touches the victim, the entire mutation turns to a powdery rust that immediately falls away for the rust monster to consume. When this occurs, the victim suffers 1d12 necrotic damage for every point of Dexterity they have lost due to calcesplasia. If the victim has more than one site of infection or mutation, roll randomly to determine which area is affected. The creature suffers damage each time a mutation is destroyed in this manner, but once the victim no longer has any clockwork components, they are completely cured of the disease.

TABLE B: LEG MUTATIONS

d6	MUTATION	EFFECT
1	Clockwork Knee	The joint of your knee has been replaced by a massive spring and clockwork gear. You may make long jumps up to 20 feet and high jumps up to 15 feet, with or without a running start. However, the gear is noisy and stutters regularly. You have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, and your walking speed is decreased by 5 feet.
2	Gripping Cog	Several sharp-toothed cogs have grown out of your foot, helping you get traction. You gain advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks made to keep your footing or keep from falling prone. Unfortunately, you cannot wear boots or other footwear. You have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws to avoid caltrops or similar dangers.
3	Oil Drip	Small pores form in the metal of your clockwork leg that constantly drip oil. As a bonus action, you may smear the oil over yourself to get advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks made to escape being grappled or restrained. Unfortunately, the oil is very flammable, and if you ever fail a saving throw versus an effect that does fire damage, you catch fire. You take 1d4 fire damage at the start of each of your turns until you extinguish the flames by using an action to make a successful DC 10 Dexterity check.
4	Paddle Foot	Your foot has been replaced by a metal flipper. You gain advantage on Strength (Athletic) checks made to swim but suffer disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks and Strength (Athletic) checks made to climb or jump.
5	Piston Leg	Both of your legs fuse together and are replaced with a spring-loaded piston. You gain advantage on Strength (Athletic) checks made to jump but suffer disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks and Strength (Athletic) checks made climb.
6	Reinforced Leg	Your leg has been replaced with hydraulics and tightly wound springs that stretch along your back. You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift. However, your leg is very heavy, and you decrease your movement speed by 10 feet.



TABLE C: ARM MUTATIONS

d6 MUTATION EFFECT

1	Bolt Fingers	Your fingers end in spring-loaded, arrowlike protrusions that you can fire as a ranged weapon attack that does 1d4 + your Dexterity modifier piercing damage with a range of 20/40. If discharged, your fingertips grow back after you complete a long rest. Your bolts are very temperamental and tend to fire when jolted. Whenever you take damage, you must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, you prematurely fire your fingertips harmlessly into the ground.
2	Clockwork Shoulder	Your shoulder has been replaced with a series of gears and pneumatic rods. If you use an action to wind the large key that sprouts from your shoulder, you can increase your Strength by 4 for your next action. However, your limb tends to wear down from normal use. You must wind your arm after every five rounds of strenuous activity, or it goes limp and useless.
3	Fist of Steel	Your hand forms into solid metal. It no longer flexes and cannot be used to pick up objects or wear gloves or gauntlets. Your hand is a natural weapon, which can be used to make unarmed strikes that do 1d4 + your Strength modifier bludgeoning damage.
4	Grasping Cables	Dozens of writhing steel cables have slithered out from underneath your skin. They grab anything nearby, giving you advantage on checks made to grapple an enemy. However, the cables have a mind of their own and attack any living creature who comes within 5 feet of you, friend or foe. They also frequently grab nearby objects whether you want to or not.
5	Telescopic Arm	Your arm becomes a series of interlocked cylinders, allowing you to extend your reach 5 feet further than normal as a bonus action. Your arm is weaker when extended, and while doing so, you suffer disadvantage on all Strength-based attack rolls and skill checks.
6	Tinker Limb	Your entire limb has been replaced with dozens of fine instruments, sprouting from a central stalk. You have advantage on fine work such as picking a lock, repairing a watch, or performing surgery as you can operate the blades, needles, wires, picks, and other tools independently. The limb cannot be used to grasp objects or wear gloves or gauntlets.

TABLE D: TORSO MUTATIONS

d6	MUTATION	EFFECT
1	Armored Carapace	Thick metal plates cover your chest, protecting your vital organs. The massive plates make it impossible to wear armor, but you may use a shield. You have disadvantage on all Dexterity-based checks. Your AC is 12 + your Dexterity modifier.
2	Clockwork Wings	A pair of clockwork wings have grown from your back, granting you a fly speed equal to your walking speed. These massive wings cannot be folded down and are always obvious. You cannot wear armor or a robe, and you have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.
3	Iron Heart	Your heart has been replaced with a clockwork pump. Your new heart is strong and steady, and you have advantage on Constitution saving throws to avoid exhaustion due to exertion. However, your heart is slow to get pumping when you get excited, and you suffer disadvantage on Initiative checks.
4	Metallic Blood	Your blood is replaced with flowing, rust-colored metal. You suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist exhaustion, but it rapidly clots, and you become immune to effects that cause bleeding or attacks that drain blood.
5	Robe of Knives	Dozens of sharp metal blades sprout from your torso. You can use a bonus action to make a melee weapon attack with your blades against a target within 5 feet. If the attack hits, the blades deal 1d4 + your piercing damage. You use your Strength modifier for the attack and damage rolls. Additionally, creatures that grapple you take 1d4 piercing damage. The blades make it impossible for you to wear armor or a robe.
6	Third Arm	A clockwork arm has grown out of your chest. The arm is not strong enough to make attacks but can pick and hold objects such as a torch or shield. The arm throws off your balance, and you suffer disadvantage on ranged attacks and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.

Dr. Brimley Angur, Case Note 127-7b: A warrior of some renown came in today, asking for me by name. Seeing the woman had but one leg, I quickly surmised her malady but wondered why she sought me out rather than someone skilled in creating a prosthesis. She explained that she had become infected with rust, and eventually cogs had replaced her knee. Much of her lower leg became metal as well. A clear case of calcesplasia. However, she had encountered a lobster-like creature with feathery antennae that she called a rust monster. When the creature touched her, it turned her infected limb into a pile of rust, which it then consumed. Upon examination, I could find no trace of the disease in her. The creature had entirely cured her somehow. I may need to employ adventurers to acquire some of these beasts for further study, though I shudder to think what would happen to a

patient who suffered critical mutations to their head or trunk should they encounter the touch of these creatures.

Elfax, Herald of Corrosion

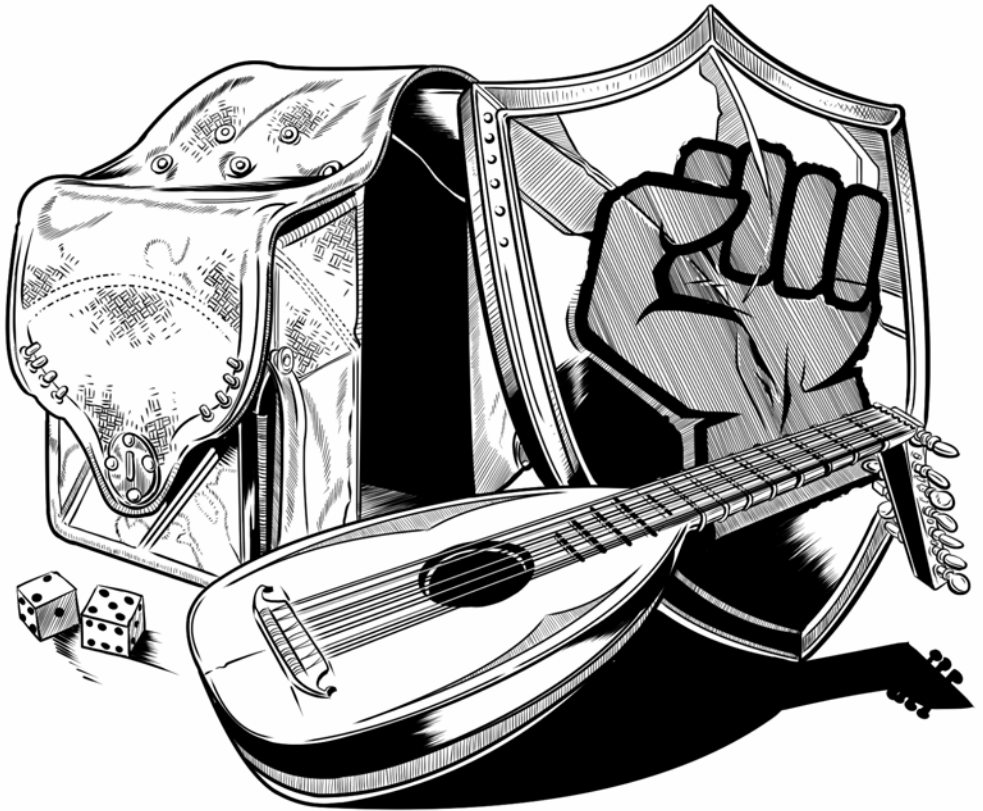
Stories have begun to circulate of a gearforged with metal horns and eyes of fire that purposely sought out infection with rust in an effort to create a pandemic of flesh and metal suffering. Unfortunately, the stories are true. Elfax (CE hellforged warlock) calls itself the Herald of Corrosion and was last seen in Verrayne. While the source of rust may be unknown, warping it into calcesplasia is the doing of this vile creature.

Elfax is generally accompanied by 2d4 **bandits**, 1d6 **cult fanatics**, and at least one **clockwork abomination** (see *Tome of Beasts*). All of them are infected. The cult has

been raiding isolated villages and capturing the inhabitants so that it can infect them. Once the villagers are infected, their homes are burned, and they are set free. Panicked villagers inevitably seek aid elsewhere, potentially spreading the contagion. Elfax's

followers worship it, and the cult would do anything to protect their master. They believe in a future where all life is a perfect fusion of metal and flesh. Suffering is the tempering flame that they need to pass through in order to claim this gift. They are utterly insane.





PLAYER



DWARVEN DEVICES: FIREARMS AND AIRSHIPS

by Ashley Warren

Dwarves are often lauded for their impeccable engineering, but this extends far past intricate stone work and into the realm of science and artifice. They delve into the Ironcrags to glean resources needed to create mechanical inventions unlike anything else seen in Midgard. Don't be fooled by the boisterous dwarf; these are nimble-handed folks who can construct the smallest of innerworkings of clocks and the most powerful of engines.

Not all dwarves are drawn to the depths. It is the cantonal dwarves, residing in the Ironcrags, who are unique among other dwarven communities. The cantons are scarred with various mountain ranges that form a ring around the region. Cantonal dwarves have a saying: "The colder the peak, the stronger the ore." As such, they'll brave the dangers of the kobold-occupied depths to collect whatever they can. Those who are successful often find acclaim and wealth. And all those unique substances found pique further interest with many of these resource-seeking dwarves continuing their studies in laboratories and workspaces.

It's nearly possible to separate the culture of mining from science, artifice, and construction. Many dwarves consider it part of the process—if you want to create something from scratch, you must first source

your materials yourself. One can only call themselves a maker if they bring something to life with their own hands.

Two notable inventions have arisen from this culture: firearms and airships. Although these developments differ greatly in their purpose, the processes of building them share many similarities. It's inarguable that these have changed Midgard irrevocably—for better or worse.

Cult of the Gear Maiden

For dwarves of Zobeck, passion for devices and constructs is more than just a lucrative endeavor. These dwarves revere the Gear Maiden, Rava, and those who worship Rava see artifice as an extension of the natural world. They do not see nature and science as incompatible but rather as a way to cultivate and process materials sourced from the wild. It is a mutually respectful relationship: Rava provides, and the dwarves of Zobeck reap, process, and build.

Maker's Marks

Dwarves who mine, forge, and craft often include a Maker's mark on their inventions, whether it's engraved on the back of a pocket watch or on the butt of a firearm. The mark is determined by the dwarf's family and the

metals they employ in their creations. Thus a mark is comprised of three components:

- First letter of the dwarf's surname.
- A symbol that represents their house. Dwarves from ancient and noble houses often have a sigil, but dwarves without such lineage typically create their own based on their personality or values.
- A shape or symbol that designates their specialty. These mirror symbols that alchemists use, and there's quite a bit of crossover between alchemists and artificers. For example, a goldsmith's mark displays a circle with a dot in the center.

More experienced dwarves may specialize in more than one material, and this is reflected in the mark. Dwarf PCs who are artificers, crafters, miners, and forgers can create a maker's mark using the same system. However, there is a prerequisite: they must create at least one item in the material they consider their "specialty." Once this item has been crafted, it must be used and stress tested. If it can suitably accomplish the purpose it was intended for, the creator is permitted to design a maker's mark. Some dwarves specialize in this design and offer this service to others.

Firearms

Gunpowder is rare in Midgard, and firearms even rarer. To create both requires a dedication to mining some of the most dangerous substances found in the Ironcrag. Swordsmiths and goldsmiths are highly respected among dwarven society, but gunsmiths supersede even the best of these because of the danger associated with their craft. Meeting a grayed and weathered gunsmith is a special and rare encounter.

The first firearm designed by dwarves was essentially a modified crossbow. Used

mostly in open-field combat, the fighter would load the bow with a bolt and pack it with gunpowder, and the arrow would shoot forth toward its target. Dwarf engineers were then eager to streamline and automate this process further, and thus the firearm was made.

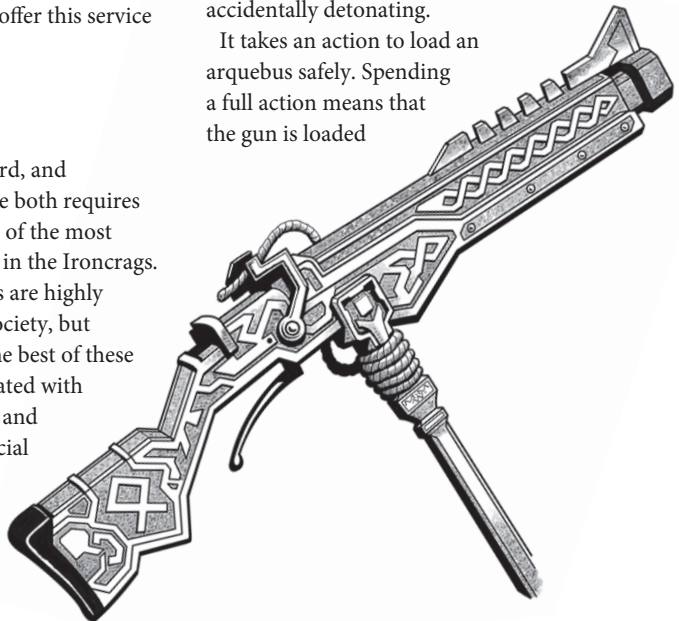
Gunsmiths continue to develop new firearms and push the boundaries of weapon design.

Even in a world where magic is commonplace, guns still inspire fear. The weapons can be unpredictable, and many gunsmiths suffer lasting injury from the volatile gunpowder. Because so much goes into crafting a firearm, dwarves don't often sell their creations. It's uncommon for these guns to be used in criminal activity because they are easily traced back to their maker. Still, some dwarves use them on the battlefield in place of more traditional weapons like axes or swords.

DWARVEN ARQUEBUS

Spot a dwarven arquebus by the intricate geometric metalwork along the barrel; most makers place their mark right on the stock. The arquebus uses bullets, which must be kept wrapped in cloth to prevent them from accidentally detonating.

It takes an action to load an arquebus safely. Spending a full action means that the gun is loaded



DWARVEN ARQUEBUS

COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
1,000 gp	1d10 piercing+1d4 fire	8 lb	ammunition (range 40/120), loading, two-handed

safely and doesn't backfire. The user adds their dexterity modifier to the attack roll. On a successful hit, the bullet causes the target 1d10 piercing damage and 1d4 fire damage.

A character can choose to load as a bonus action instead; however, quick loading the firearm has a 20% chance of backfiring. If the gun backfires, the user suffers 1d6 fire damage, and the gun must be repaired before it can be used again.

The arquebus can be improved to increase damage. Spending downtime to refine and rebuild the gun increases the damage by another d10, capped at 3d10. Improvements may include expanding the bullet chamber, adding a scope, shortening or lengthening the barrel, or any other change that would affect the gun's mechanical abilities.

BOMB

Miners often make bombs to help clear out large amounts of stone and ore; however, the bombs can also be used in combat. Crafting a bomb is dangerous as is any activity involving gunpowder. The powder must be wrapped in parchment and then contained in a cylindrical vessel comprised of wood or a thin, pliable metal. Lighting the wick leads to its detonation in a 10-foot space; any creature within that space suffers from 5d6 fire damage. A DC 12 Dexterity save halves the damage.

Dwarven Bomb. As an action, a character can light this bomb and throw it at a point up to 30 feet away. Each creature within 5 feet of that point suffers 5d6 fire damage; a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage.

Type Adventuring gear; Cost 300 gp; Weight 2 lb.

Airships

The invention of the airship can be traced back to Klaudus Erdogant. Like many scientific developments, the energy source of airships was discovered by accident. Originally an alchemist, Klaudus invented "liftgas" by dissolving a waxy material in boiling water; the paste that resulted emitted a potent gas that lifted the parchment under which it was being stored. An additional experiment—a lit match—confirmed Klaudus's suspicions that the gas was indeed flammable. Klaudus survived his laboratory explosion but lost a finger, which he considered quite worth the cost of science.

Both the gas and Klaudus's inspiration were ignited, and he turned his attention to harnessing this interesting gas, for it could emulate the (normally magical) processes of flight. After much trial and tribulation, he was able to fill a pigskin balloon with the gas. Lo and behold, the balloon floated around the laboratory—much to Klaudus's delight—until it too exploded in an array of fleshy carnage. Klaudus emerged unscathed and continued to refine his design, using a silk that was less prone to porous gas leaks. Eventually he developed an airship that could carry him alone, and this led to the creation of more substantial airships.

Unfortunately, Klaudus's invention was also what killed him. When demonstrating a prototype of a more substantial airship to a group of potential patrons, the craft crashed and burned with Klaudus inside. This didn't, however, stop the patriarchs from continuing Klaudus's research and funding additional airship development.

Klaudus was a priest of Volund and resided on the holy ground of Templeforge, and as

requested by the Archpatriarch, Klaudus's widow sold his lab notes to Onderval Templeforge. Onderval took up the mantle of airship engineer and built several notable expansions to Klaudus's designs, including a steam-powered propeller that allowed the ships to travel much farther distances.

Airships were quickly adapted for use in combat. The single-rider ships were used to transport dwarven engineers to the city gate during the Siege of Latorne. This stealth action lowered the engineers onto the city gate, enabling them to declare victory.

Both acolytes of Volund and Rava have a connection to airships and count the sight of one as a positive omen. Templeforge is abundant with the substances needed to produce liftgas. However, this process is strenuous, and a new airship is only created around once every 20 years. It is very expensive to maintain an airship that is safe to fly. Still, those who are part of the industry enjoy their lucrative career.

TYPES OF AIRSHIPS

Dwarven airships come in different designs. Most popular and well-known is the blimp-style airship in which the entire mechanical structure and residential quarters are ensconced within a liftgas-filled balloon. These can vary wildly in size.

Other airships have carriages that suspend from the bottom of the balloon. These are more frequently used in combat.

AIRSHIPS IN COMBAT

Despite the strenuous work it takes to build one, airships are surprisingly delicate constructs and easily felled by enemies. Unfortunately, though, many airships fail rather by mistakes of the crew or passengers.

However, the benefit of using an airship in combat comes down to stealth and the element of surprise. Few warriors expect to see an airship flying overhead, and this

provides their combatants ample opportunity to drop bombs upon their surprised enemies.

Some wartime airships are powered entirely by constructs, which prevents loss of life when the fighters eventually turn their attention to the aircraft above. However, some take issue with this, for many makers treat their constructs as familiars and laboratory assistants.

The Liftgas Merchant Marine Air Corps is the only organized airship militia. Joining the LMMAC is prestigious; most involved are dwarves and many dwarven families dream of having a family member become part of the LMMAC.

CREW OF AN AIRSHIP

Manning an airship is not unlike a ship at sea. Captains must closely follow weather patterns to avoid inadvertently leading a crew to danger. The sky's patterns mirror those of the sea, and the climate can change at a moment's notice. A crew must work together to keep the airship afloat.

- **Captain:** The captain is in charge of piloting the ship (and in fact, some airship crews call their captain the "pilot," but this has yet to catch on). Captains must undergo rigorous training to earn their title and the coveted pair of goggles awarded upon their graduation. The tests a captain takes require extensive knowledge of the intricate interworkings of the engine, the ability to repair the ship while it's in flight, and an arsenal of spells or arcane tools to employ in the event of an emergency. Most airship captains tend to be dwarves, for they are among the few who possess such knowledge and expertise.
- **First Officer:** The first officer assists the captain in any way possible, including managing the rest of the crew and ensuring that the airship is in flyable condition.

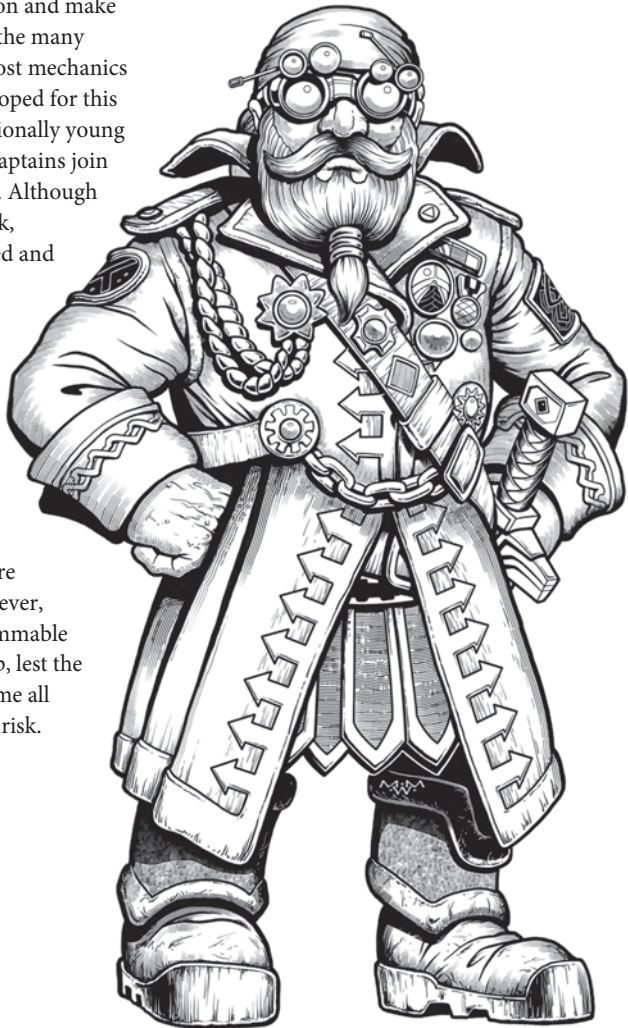
- **Navigator:** Captains often employ mages or oracles to serve as navigators. This has both an immediate role in keeping an eye on the skies to plan for danger or inclement weather as well as an arcane role in determining the viability of a voyage and divining potential threats.
- **Chief Artificer:** The chief artificer oversees all mechanical components on the ship and manages the mechanics who work under their direction.
- **Mechanic:** In the event of an emergency, mechanics spring into action and make all necessary repairs using the many materials kept on hand. Most mechanics tend to be constructs developed for this specific purpose, but occasionally young dwarves who aspire to be captains join the mech crew for training. Although it may seem like grunt work, engine mechanics are prized and respected by the crew.
- **Cleric:** Most ships employ at least one healer who can ensure that the crew remains healthy and able.
- **Cook:** For long journeys, cooks are brought on board to ensure that crew members and passengers are well fed. They are not, however, permitted to use fire or flammable chemistry while on the ship, lest the liftgas catch fire and consume all within. No pie is worth the risk.

- **Bard:** An airship bard helps improve crew morale. These bards often favor wind instruments.

CAPTAIN'S GOGGLES

Rare wondrous item, requires attunement

Airship captain's goggles are made of copper and glass designed to repel water and to never fog. While wearing these goggles, the wearer cannot suffer from exhaustion. They are fitted specifically for the wearer and are marked



with the captain's name. The goggles can only be attuned to one person.

If the goggles break, the wearer must be the one to repair them; otherwise the goggles lose their magical properties.

Character Options

The following character options are available for cantonal dwarf PCs:

STONELESS (BACKGROUND)

Dwarves who spend a lot of time on airships are often referred to as the Stoneless. These are dwarves who have less experience in the mines and do not possess the same abilities to forge and craft items as their cantonal brethren. However, they have a keen understanding for how to build, maintain, and pilot an airship.

d4 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 I prefer the company of engines and technology to people.
- 2 I can discern the needs of an airship the way miners can sleuth out the most potent veins of ore.
- 3 I help build any ship on which I fly and know everything about it. Any ship I build is safe and efficient.
- 4 Like many dwarves, I seem gruff, but I take a liking to anyone who also enjoys airships.

d4 IDEAL

- 1 More people should experience life in the skies. It puts everything else into perspective.
- 2 While in flight, my life belongs to the ship. I owe it respect and care.
- 3 The world would be a better place if more people chose to travel via airship.
- 4 If I never had to return to ground, I would remain in the sky forever. This is my home and where I am most comfortable and productive.

d4 BOND

- 1 I am close with my crew and will do anything to protect them. I consider them my family.
- 2 Whatever the captain says is what I believe. If I am the captain, I expect my crew and I to have consensus over decision making.
- 3 If my ship is used in combat, it's for a righteous cause. I would only put my ship and crew in harm's way in pursuit of something good.
- 4 I never refer to an engine or mechanic as "broken"; I consider it bad luck to refer to technology like that. Instead, I refer to it as "needing" something, like care or maintenance.

d4 FLAW

- 1 I bristle at those who think life aboard an airship is "easy," and my temper is easily stoked.
- 2 I do not always get along with other dwarves who are more experienced miners and forgers. They don't understand my skillset, and I don't understand theirs.
- 3 I spend so much of my life in the air I am disconnected by the politics of life down below.
- 4 Navigation on land eludes me.

AIRSHIP ACOLYTE (BACKGROUND)

Acolytes who serve on airships can be clerics who aid in healing or even combat or any crew member who sees the sailing of airships as a spiritual experience. These are often

acolytes of Volund although they may serve any deity that has a connection to mining, science, or artifice related to the development of airships.

d4 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 I am quite introverted and introspective once a ship takes flight. I consider flight to be meditative.
- 2 I intimately know the innerworkings of airships and am attuned to their needs.
- 3 I am always eager to set sail on a new voyage. The farther I can travel via airship, the better.
- 4 I enjoy sharing my values and passion for airships with others who may not know as much about these wondrous inventions.

d4 IDEAL

- 1 The sky is the realm of the gods, and we navigate through their home. They'll permit us safe passage if we do not anger them.
- 2 My temple is wherever I go, and my faith is not constrained by arbitrary traditions or practices.
- 3 An airship is like a ship at sea and deserves a name. The crew must treat the ship with respect.
- 4 Scientists and artificers have a responsibility to not put their creations in harm's way. The things we bring to life have value and personality.

d4 Bond

- 1 I regard all light and weather patterns as omens. A crew will never be caught off guard.
- 2 I am not frightened by the expanse of the sky and the creatures that live within it.
- 3 The voice of the engines and mechanics is the voice of the gods, speaking to us through their manifestations.
- 4 I value the ships on which I serve and revere them as a friend.

d4 FLAW

- 1 I don't understand those who are fearful of flying or heights.
- 2 The way I pray and practice my faith is often strange and foreign to others as their ways are to me.
- 3 I don't understand gods or beliefs that see nature and technology as separate.
- 4 I don't think airships should be used in combat; to me, that goes against their purpose and uses their creation for harm instead of good.

COURTFOLK: THE QUIET PEOPLE OF THE COVENANT

by Victoria Jaczko

No creature epitomizes the art of graceful service like the courtfolk, an accomplishment these halflings take with great (but quiet) pride. Courtfolk are defined by their dedication and deference to the great elven courts of old, but their identities are in flux in the wake of the Great Retreat. Now their oaths are sworn to the variable moods and personalities of scattered elfmarked lords, to the humans in large cities who see halflings as a simple labor force, and to rare elves who are not quite what they once were. Centuries of elven absence have been difficult on the courtfolk, but they, like all halflings, have proven capable of adapting to a world that no longer needs them as they were.

Fey-Touched Finery

Courtfolk are as small in size and stature as any halfling. Their long proximity to elves and the Elflands shows in their complexion, usually pale and freckled with light-colored eyes and curly mops of hair. Courtfolk prefer neat, well-tailored clothing (most of which they make themselves) with touches of elven inspiration apparent without ever descending into gaudy imitation. Men typically wear baggy trousers and tight vests and women favor flowing skirts with bodices. Colors are pastel or forest tones and muted, befitting a servant, but never drab. Elven jewelry is common among halflings of any gender as are

smoking pipes. Courtfolk women particularly favor pipes of unique design.

Courtfolk are not motivated by material wealth or luxury, finding genuine contentment in simple things, but what they *do* keep, they desire to be of fine quality. They take pains to care for their clothing, family heirlooms, musical instruments, work implements, and other valued possessions.

History of Servitude

The provenance of the courtfolk—indeed, all halflings—is the subject of speculation, and one the halflings themselves are curiously unconcerned with solving. Some suspicious humans maintain halflings were once human servants, but frequent exposure to the Elflands and the magic there left them stunted and enthralled to the fey. An occasional mage postulates the halflings were wholly created as elven servitors, made up partly of Midgard's substance and given life by fey magic.

The courtfolk themselves laugh off such claims. They maintain they are simply halflings, but unlike the reclusive winterfolk and sly riverfolk, they did not break faith with the covenant they forged, by choice, with the great elven lords and ladies of old. The courtfolk are what halflings should be, they claim, and their pitiable offshoot cousins are defined by their loss of purpose.



Numerous families of courtfolk once served elven courts from Arbonesse to Valera and every holding in between. They were expert craftsmen, faithful seneschals, discreet handmaids, efficient butlers, reliable messengers, unexpected bodyguards, and talented gardeners such that their elven masters trusted few others with their breathtaking gardens and courtyards. While never ostentatious, halflings whose families served since the earliest days of the elves' arrival bore a certain prestige among their own, respect owed for the lengths of their good service.

Most of these families disappeared in the Great Retreat with their lords and ladies, separated from friends and kin. Those remaining behind honored their oaths, lingering in the fading courts and subservient to elfmarked descendants of once-mighty rulers. Time wore on, and a seed of sorrow took root in the courtfolk, though hidden by deference and cheery service. The names of kin gone since the Last Horn are recorded among them from generation to generation and repeated in their private songs and stories.

Servants Without Masters

Courtfolk enjoy long lives, lingering in a pleasant old age for up to 350 years, a century longer than most halflings do. Most have a parent or grandparent who remembers the old courts and passed down their stories, mannerisms, and a keen sense of loss. As such, adapting to newfound freedom in only one or two generations has proven difficult for those who remained after the Last Horn. As observed with some small bitterness, those halflings who abandoned their duties and wandered away, becoming winterfolk and riverfolk elsewhere, seem to have had less trouble.

Only the secluded River Court and the Imperatrix's own Royal Court still maintain families of courtfolk servants in significant numbers. Outside of the remaining courts, courtfolk struggle to maintain their family identities against their oaths, scattered as they are among elfmarked fiefs and baronies. Worse off still are the greater numbers of courtfolk in the young kingdoms, working as common servants to humans and other races without the mutually beneficial arrangements enjoyed under their old elven masters. Courtfolk families try to stick together in these circumstances, but kinship ties tend to unravel while serving those who neither understand nor are inclined to learn the necessities of courtfolk family relationships.

Courtfolk without holdings or patrons to serve sometimes find places to settle as families. Reywald, a popular destination, has so many halflings that it supports Little Reywald, a halfling and gnome village north of the city. It's not the elven courts, but for many courtfolk, it's good enough to serve in the city and come home to family. Others realize they are very much stuck—nothing more than leftover servants for others to use.

In recent decades—and virtually unheard of before then—some courtfolk, primarily castoffs from the still-functioning courts or the rare halfling who emerges from the military with exemplary service, spearhead a business enterprise with their family. These businesses number a mere handful in Dornig and less in the Crossroads. Still beholden to courtfolk nature, such business attempts orient toward hospitality and service: artisan shops, bakeries, inns, taverns, and the like. Breaking from the mold as servants and underlings is difficult. In order to do so, courtfolk must overcome dismissive attitudes toward their role as servants, which is uncomfortable for them. They aren't predisposed to be ashamed by their lives of service. As a result, even successful courtfolk accept less than what they deserve and settle for subsistence.

Hospitality, Home, and Hearth

Courtfolk maintain servitude was never forced upon them but freely chosen. This belief, true or not, gives them a sense of agency and relevance to their servitude. The profound delight the courtfolk derive from being of service to others and in performing a job well stems from knowing they have controlled their destiny.

Service is an honor to the courtfolk. The halfling reverence for hearth and home is as strong in them as any other, but the courtfolk extend this reverence into the notion of powerful hospitality: as natives of this realm, they considered it a duty and a privilege to make the elves, guests from the other side of Midgard, feel welcome, comfortable, and cared for in a world not their own. Service comes to the courtfolk out of compassion rather than fear or awe (although certainly individual courtfolk may come to fear or worship their masters based on treatment), but it is deeply unseemly of a servant to point out what good service they provide. Courtfolk seldom discuss with others the importance of their role and find contentment in any reward, praise, or even an acknowledging nod from their patrons.

When exemplifying their role as perfect servants, someone could be excused for not noticing a courtfolk at all: they excel in drawing attention *away*, focused on their masters, and in moving through the world with quiet, unassuming grace. The same observer might be intrigued to discover courtfolk have rich private lives of their own.

Courtfolk have a practical, down-to-earth culture, appreciating simple things like healthy gardens, a good book, cheery music, and the company of friends. When the courts they served could support it, they made their homes in partially underground burrows, all part of a greater community. A courtfolk home needed to accommodate multiple generations under one roof. In recent

times, more courtfolk take their lodgings wherever available where they are serving or increasingly attempt to establish their own homesteads and villages as they carve out new places in the world.

Gatherings are important to courtfolk. Servitude is usually a year-round affair, and getting halflings together for stories, matchmaking, and reinforcing ties can be difficult. Family connections are vital for a courtfolk's well-being; no one but their own kin can truly understand the joys and sorrows of being called to service. All courtfolk are invited to gatherings, whether or not they can officially prove kinship. Unlike the stately and organized affairs they help orchestrate in elven courts, courtfolk gatherings are much more informal as details shift with the whims of their patrons and courtfolk adjust accordingly.

At a minimum, a courtfolk celebration must have lively music, excellent food and drink, the freshest flowers, sunshine, and as many kin, friends, and pets as can be gathered into one place. Most matchmakings are made at courtfolk gatherings as one of the few times when a couple can be in one place to receive blessings from both families.

In the Elven Courts

Within the courts of the River King and the Imperatrix, courtfolk serve elfmarked (or less commonly true elven) patrons with all the cheer and skill of their historical reputations. These are often the oldest yet remaining courtfolk families with the greatest prestige, but for all that, they have their hands full. Those with the Imperatrix's Royal Procession in Reywald have had no end of logistical and political nightmares thrust upon them since she fell into slumber. The maintenance of the Great Procession, politely redirecting petitioners and emissaries to other parties, and keeping alert eyes on suspicious characters who might see opportunities in the

Imperatrix's indisposition consumes nearly all their time. What time they *do* have is taken up by their own kin who live in and around Reywald as common servants. The courtfolk in the Great Procession currently can't turn around without yet another distant cousin angling to be added to the Royal Court's servant retinue.

The River Court is largely withdrawn from most affairs as are now the courtfolk families who serve it. Here perhaps more so than anywhere, the relationship between courtfolk servant and elven master has continued with the least disruption. This idyllic existence has a complication however; as the elder generation of courtfolk have passed, the seclusion of the River Court has come into stark relief. The courtfolk here have had little contact with their kin outside of it, and many years pass without even hearing about a courtfolk gathering. Even if they did, many fear to leave and visit in case there is any risk of being unable to return. Courtfolk weddings and births have diminished here, and the families—among the eldest yet remaining on this side of Midgard—fear their current generation may be the last, yet setting off and away from the last true bastion of elven glory is even more terrifying.

These troubles compound the heartache courtfolk feel for their long-lost kin and way of life. Little news travels between the realms anymore, and what does is about elven politics and concerns, not servants. Whatever is transpiring in the Summer Lands, the courtfolk know nothing of how their long-vanished kin are faring. The recent resurgence of elves in Arbonesse has given them hope however that perhaps at last things may return to how they were. To some courtfolk though, beginning to flex newfound independence, this is more of a worry than a hope.

Into Darkness

Courtfolk are strongly tied to their elven patrons, even following them during the Great Retreat. When the elves proved corruptible during the Sorceress's Revolt and fell to shadow, many of their servants followed as proven by the gnomes and pixies serving in the Moonlit Courts. The courtfolk however were a notable exception; when their masters turned to dark powers, their courtfolk fled to the remaining elven lines. There is no record of any significant population of halflings serving in the Shadow Realm. While seldom investigated, it is surmised that the courtfolk dedication to hospitality and selflessness, combined with inclinations toward contentment, renders them immune to Shadow temptations of ambition and greed.

Despite this, they aren't incorruptible. While they cannot be swayed to dark powers with usual tactics, there is a growing population of courtfolk in Zobeck who have, since the Great Retreat and splintering of their families, been unable to find their own way. To them, serving the shadow fey—serving *any* elf—is preferable to serving no one. These courtfolk are faded reflections of themselves, their sunny attitudes and energy muted and buried beneath a jaded cynicism. They remain excellent servitors but have lost the spirit of hospitality: the shadow fey send them to infiltrate targets' households as mere servants, but they act as spies, rumor mongers, thieves, and in rare cases, poisoners with expert knowledge of deadly herbs.

Creating a Future

The courtfolk adventurer is less absurd than it seems, but their adventures tend to be motivated by one of two things: loyalty to an ally or generating money to look after their families. Service doesn't pay well, and forward-thinking, younger courtfolk see that without wealth their families are going to continue being splintered apart in service to

those who seldom appreciate them. Courtfolk aren't motivated by greed but are shrewd enough to weigh the risks and rewards of adventuring and choose appropriately.

If unable to be with their families, courtfolk gravitate toward powerful personalities. They are picky in this, seeking good, benevolent people, but once they've chosen to befriend someone, that's it. A courtfolk is a dauntless ally and comrade-in-arms and never aims to steal the credit for their friends' derring-do. Their loyalty and practicality make them faithful companions in the heart of a dungeon as much as an intrigue-steeped noble court.

Courtfolk Names

Courtfolk names have an obvious elven influence, mired as they have been in elven culture for generations. Their given names are shorter than elves' but with a notably softer and lilting flair than other halflings. Family names are borrowed from the common names of the elf that the family first served as vassals and prefixed by *of*. The older the lineage, the more the family's prestige. Sometimes a courtfolk's primary role is added to the end of their name, especially since the Great Retreat as more courtfolk lose touch with their family lineages. A River Court courtfolk might be named Silla of Stars-Cook, but in Hirsh-Dammung, she is probably just Silla Cook.

MALE NAMES

Adan, Alis, Aran, Aus, Berri, Carr, Darris, Errian, Ervio, Galin, Immerin, Ivello, Luc, Pael, Perin, Rai, Ral, Ren, Rian, Soven, Taris, Tham, Thel, Van, Varr

FEMALE NAMES

Adie, Annas, Andra, Bethry, Cae, Dania, Elle, Felosa, Jelen, Keyle, Lathe, Lea, Merri, Mia, Naia, Netha, Phia, Quilla, Rynn, Shanna, Silla, Thea, Valla, Vara, Xan

FAMILY NAMES

Autumn, Brooks, Chase, Dances, Eyes, Flower, Gem, Hawk, Journey, Keys, Leaf, Moon, Night, Oak, Petals, Quick, River, Stars, Tower, Vale, Whisper, Young

Courtfolk Halfling Traits

Courtfolk are at home in elven courts and politics and have had generations to practice the art of remaining unnoticed until needed. They also care deeply for their companions and for the natural world, making them excellent in supportive roles. They make good rogues, though they care little for stealing, but also excel as bards, druids, or sorcerers, thanks to their innate glamour. Courtfolk have the following two traits and modification in addition to standard halfling traits.

Age. Courtfolk are the longest-lived of the halfling subraces, perhaps owing to their close association with elves. Courtfolk are elderly by their second century but enjoy relatively pleasant and unhindered old age well past 300 years.

Boon Companion. You are quick to step in and help your friends, and you have a knack for knowing exactly how to best do it. When you work with an ally to complete a task or take the Help action in combat, your ally adds a d4 to their check or attack roll (this includes the second roll made with advantage).

Wee Glamour. You are—ever so slightly—imbued with a bit of elven magic. You move with grace, your laugh is always pleasant, and colors are more vibrant on you. Your Charisma score increases by 1, and you have advantage on saves against spells of the enchantment school.

VARIANT COURTFOLK TRAITS: SHADOW SERVITORS

Those courtfolk who elect to serve shadow fey are usually broken spirits to start with, and over time, the cracks in their souls become filled with something darker.

Disquiet. You still look like your old self, but your mind is changed by the knowledge you've accepted—and you're not sure it's for the better. Your Intelligence score increases by 1. Additionally, something in your eyes makes people uneasy around you. You have advantage on Charisma (Intimidate) and Charisma (Deception) checks against humanoids.

Silent Steps. You've always been adept at evading notice, but now your own shadow seems to muffle the noise you make. You can cast the silence spell once per day centered on yourself, which you can end at any time by speaking. Additionally, you always have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to be quiet.

Courtfolk Background: Court Servant

Courtfolk are a long-lived race, and old habits have been hard to shake. The majority of courtfolk, even independent now, were once servants at some point in their lives. These halflings are experts in complex social dynamics and knowledgeable in elven history and customs.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Nature

Tool Proficiencies: One artisan's tools set of your choice

Languages: Elven

Equipment: One artisan's tools set of your choice, a unique piece of elven jewelry, a set of fine clothes, a handcrafted pipe, and a belt pouch containing 20 gp

FEATURE: SERVANT'S INVISIBILITY

The art of excellent service requires a balance struck between being always available and yet unobtrusive, and you've mastered it. If you do not perform a visible action, speak or be spoken to, or otherwise have attention drawn to you for at least 1 minute, creatures nearby have trouble remembering you are even in the room. Until you speak, perform a visible

action, or have someone draw attention to you, creatures must attempt a Wisdom save (DC 8 + your Charisma modifier + your proficiency bonus) to notice you. Otherwise,

they will conduct themselves as though you aren't present until either attention is drawn to you or one of their actions would take them into or adjacent to the square you occupy.

d8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 Unless I must speak, I hold my breath while serving others.
- 2 It takes all my effort not to show the effusive emotions I feel when I help others. Best to quietly serve.
- 3 It's getting harder to tolerate the prejudices of those I serve daily.
- 4 Though the old ways are hard to give up, I want to be my own boss. I'll decide my path.
- 5 Serving my family and friends is the only thing I truly care about.
- 6 City life is killing my soul. I long for the old courtly ways.
- 7 It's time for my fellows to wake up and be taken advantage of no longer.
- 8 It's the small things that make it all worth while. I try to be present in every moment.

d6 IDEAL

- 1 **Family.** My family, whether the one I come from or the one I make, is the thing in this world most worth protecting. (Any)
- 2 **Service.** I am most rewarded when I know I have performed a valuable service for another. (Good)
- 3 **Sloth.** What's the point of helping anyone when we've been discarded? Our existence is an elven joke. (Chaotic)
- 4 **Compassion.** I can't resist helping anyone in need. (Good)
- 5 **Tradition.** Life under elven rule was best, and things should be kept as close to their ideals as possible. (Lawful)
- 6 **Joy.** The pursuit of happiness is the only thing worth serving anymore. (Neutral)

d6 BOND

- 1 My family needs me to provide for them. They mean everything to me, which means I'll do whatever it takes.
- 2 My kin have served this holding and its lords and ladies since before the Great Retreat. I serve them faithfully to make my lineage proud.
- 3 I can't read the inscriptions on this odd elven ring, but it's all I have left of my family and our history of loyal service.
- 4 I'm with the best friends a halfling can ask for, so why do I feel so lonesome and homesick?
- 5 I've found a profession where my skills are put to good use, and I won't let anyone bring me down—I'm already short enough.
- 6 I found peace in a special garden filled with beautiful life, but I only have this flower to remind me. Someday I'll remember where to find that garden.

d6 FLAW

- 1 I would rather serve darkness than serve no one.
- 2 I'm afraid of taking risks that might be good for me.
- 3 I believe elves are superior to all other races, and I'm not afraid to share that truth.
- 4 I always do as I'm told, even though sometimes I don't think I should.
- 5 I know what's best for everyone, and they'd all be better off if they'd follow my advice.
- 6 I can't stand seeing ugly or depressing things. I'd much rather think happy thoughts.



Courtfolk Feats

Courtfolk halflings have developed the following feats.

ADAPTABLE MAGIC

Prerequisite: The ability to cast at least one spell

You possess great finesse with magic, either by virtue of generations of ancestral service in elven courts or potentially knowledge gleaned from service to the Shadow:

- You learn one Metamagic option of your choice from among those available to the sorcerer class.
- If you already have sorcery points, you gain one more. Otherwise, you have two sorcery points, which recharge after a long rest.

Courtfolk Magic Items

A few specialized enchanted items circulate among courtfolk families, either created by them or created for them, and most are intended to make their jobs more pleasant and efficient.

SENESCHAL'S GLOVES

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement, see below)

These white gloves have elegant tailoring and size themselves perfectly to fit your hands. A pair of *seneschal's gloves* must be attuned not only to a person but to a specific, habitable place with walls, a roof, and doors. To attune to a place, the gloves must be left in the location from one dawn to the next. The gloves cannot be attuned to a creature until they have attuned to a location although they can still be worn.

While you wear the gloves, you may unlock any nonmagical lock within the attuned location by touch, and any mundane portal you open while wearing these gloves will open silently.

As an action, you may snap your fingers and every nonmagical portal within 30 feet of you will immediately close and lock itself (if possible) so long as it is unobstructed. (Obstructed portals remain open.) Once used, this ability cannot be used again until the next dawn.

STORYTELLER'S PIPE

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This long-shanked wooden smoking pipe is etched with leaves along the bowl. It is serviceable as a typical pipe, but as an action, you can blow out smoke and shape it into wispy images and manipulate them as *silent image* with a range limited to the 10-foot cone in front of you and images no larger than a 5-foot cube. The smoky images last for 3 rounds before fading, but you can continue blowing smoke to create more until the pipe burns through the smoking material in it.



Additionally, if you use the *storyteller's pipe's* command word, you may blast a cloud of hazy, choking smoke in a 30-foot cone in front of you. Creatures within the haze have half-cover and must attempt DC 15 Constitution saving throws or be afflicted with debilitating coughing and wheezing, unable to speak or cast spells with verbal components and gaining one level of exhaustion, for 1 minute.

Courtfolk Spells

Of all halflings, the courtfolk are the most magically adept.

WHISPERING GARDENS

2nd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Self (120-foot radius)

Components: V, S, M (a garden at least 10-ft.-by-10-ft. large with cultivated, healthy vegetation to use as a focus)

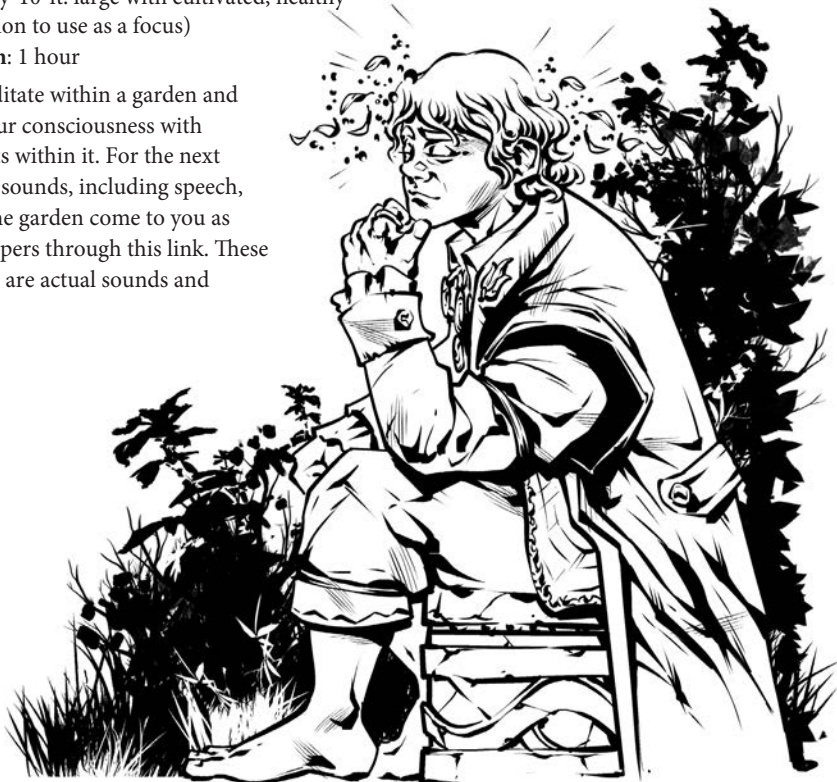
Duration: 1 hour

You meditate within a garden and share your consciousness with the plants within it. For the next hour, all sounds, including speech, within the garden come to you as soft whispers through this link. These whispers are actual sounds and

can be drowned out in loud environments, potentially requiring a Perception check (DC 15 for a noisy tavern equivalent or DC 20 for combat). In a quiet environment, it is possible for others to hear the whispers if they are within 5 feet of you and make a successful Perception check against your spell save DC. Only sounds inside the garden's boundaries (determined by gates, fencing, hedges, or where cultivated plants give way to wild growth) are transmitted. The boundaries of the spell are set at the time of casting. After that, you may leave the spell's area of effect and maintain your link with the garden.

This spell transmits sounds with as much accuracy as possible while remaining a whisper. It does not convey individual voices or identify the source of the noise.

This spell cannot be cast within range of sentient plants.



RIVERFOLK: THE SCATTERED PEOPLE OF THE TRADE

by Victoria Jaczko

From ramshackle patchwork barges to the decks of fishing boats and smuggling vessels, riverfolk halflings are found along the greatest rivers of the Crossroads... and some of the less great. The gruff barge pilot in the wide-brimmed hat, predicting a river with near-prescient skill; the singer, stamping out rhythms on the deck while belting out bawdy songs; the charming huckster, swindling the big folk out of their savings for promises and trinkets with a gleam in his eye—all different but all riverfolk and all making their sometimes contentious homes wherever the current takes them.

Barge-Born

Riverfolk are, by their own description, not as “fussy” as the courtfolk, bowing in Arbonesse, or their stodgy winterfolk cousins, scavenging in the Rothenian Plains and farther north. Riverfolk laugh more, drink more, fight more, and by their own consideration, have much more fun. They have dark coloring all around, various shades of woody browns from hair to eyes to skin. They blend as well with a dark alley as a ship’s deck. Men and women dress similarly in practical working clothing, mostly tough canvas or leather shirts and pants, and favor hefty, good-quality work gloves. Most riverfolk don some type of hat as a preferred accessory, from the floppy, wide-brimmed to caps bearing jaunty duck feathers. Riverfolk

are small, as all halflings, a little stockier although more graceful than most.

Most riverfolk are found along the River Argent, especially around Zobeck and its neighbors, but wherever river routes are good, they go. These halflings have made themselves a home in most every river port where they’ve been permitted to spread. Zobeck, Magdar, the Seven Cities, and even Krakova—riverfolk found they can do a brisk business with the dead if one doesn’t get squeamish—regularly have riverfolk in their ports.

Preternatural Navigators

The courtfolk have it that the riverfolk and winterfolk were servitors like them but forsook their oaths following the Great Retreat and lost their connection to the Summer Lands. Riverfolk put no stock in this story; according to them, the riverfolk were once the only type of halfling there was, and most riverfolk now are descended from the ones who didn’t get wooed by elven promises. As to why the elves took interest is a subject seldom brought up to outsiders: the riverfolks’ birthright, an inherent connection to the mysterious ley lines of Midgard.

Riverfolk don’t claim any type of powerful arcane culture, now or ever, but they sense ley lines the way others can sense a storm brewing without a cloud in the sky. Some even learn to follow them, accessing the shadow

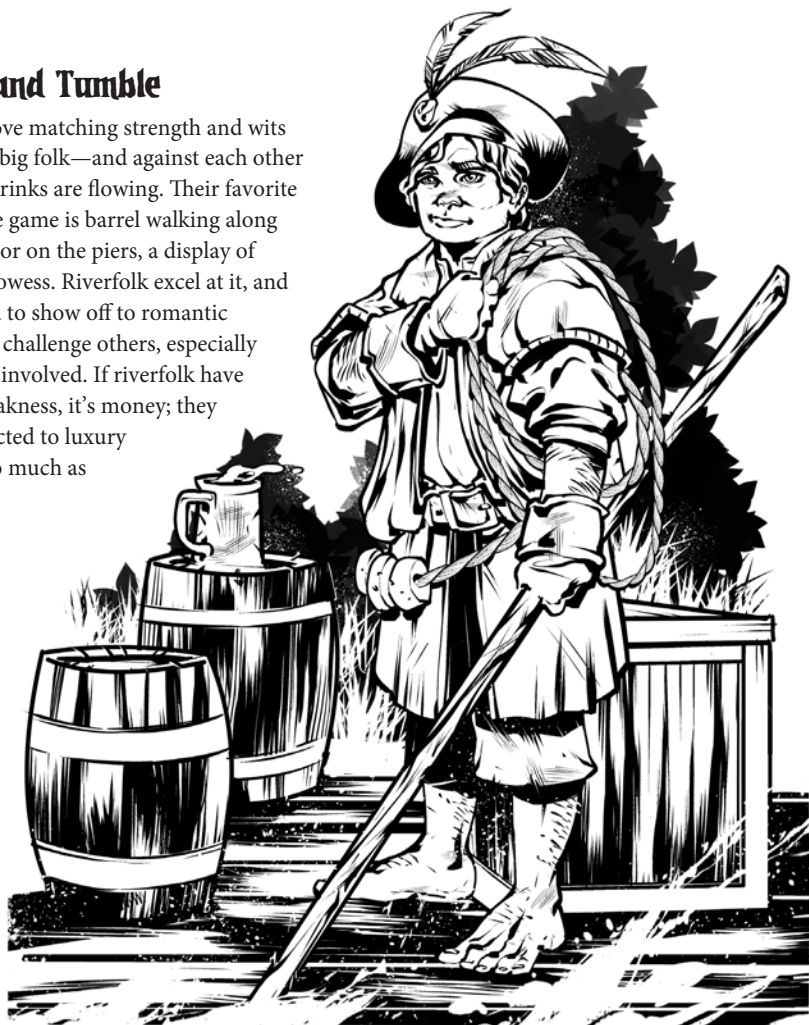
roads for brisk travel or even last-ditch hiding places. Most take the presence of a ley line as a sign to be cautious and nothing more. That connection, however, must have surprised the elves and maybe even intimidated them—and so they took some riverfolk as favored servants in pretty cages and slowly warped that power into the glamour the courtfolk now possess. Those halflings who fled into their ranks following the Great Retreat regained their ley line connections over time but lost their glamour and longevity. According to the riverfolk, that’s all the proof they need of the truth.

Rough and Tumble

Riverfolk love matching strength and wits against the big folk—and against each other too, if the drinks are flowing. Their favorite competitive game is barrel walking along their decks or on the piers, a display of physical prowess. Riverfolk excel at it, and they’re glad to show off to romantic interests or challenge others, especially if money is involved. If riverfolk have a major weakness, it’s money; they aren’t attracted to luxury comforts so much as

their frequent hobnobbing with big folk has taught them that money is the surest way to respect and freedom. This has given them a predilection to gambling, typically unable to resist a card or dice game. While halflings are notoriously lucky, they can push that luck to the limit. Once it runs out—well, there’s more than one reason why riverfolk make a habit of crime.

Riverfolk have shrewd business minds, and they go where the risk-reward ratio is best. Smuggling proved a natural fit for them,



especially once they sorted out that few non-halfings could tell them apart. Barges keep complex smuggling schedules that operate primarily through word-of-mouth with illegal cargo seldom being shipped on the same barge more than twice in a row. The patchwork barges the big folk deride as floating eyesores are perfect smuggling vessels: they are infuriatingly hard to search as they go against typical construction layouts and have many hidden pockets and secret trapdoors impossible to distinguish from the main ship. In the time it takes to search one halfling barge that may have no smuggled cargo on it, two more have time to load up contraband and leave.

Few dare suggest the halfling barges be outlawed altogether however. Despite the complaints against smugglers, riverfolk are more notable for their remarkable capability in forging rivers, and few others can with the same efficiency. They've been welcome sights in remote areas in need of food and common goods and in the larger cities and kingdoms for the rare goods and news they bring back.

Animal Ken

Most barges utilize draft mules to haul their boats upstream, but the going is notoriously slow and tedious. Riverfolk, however, enjoy a knack with animals that persuades their mules to work as part of the team. Riverfolk mules are efficient and determined, hauling their barges upstream faster with less goading and few mishaps. When asked if they use magic to get their animals to behave, riverfolk just shrug and say everyone works better when shown proper respect.

This knack extends beyond draft animals. Riverfolk fishermen enjoy bountiful catches, reeling in fish while big folk swear the river's gone barren. Birds like to roost on riverfolk boats and homes and tend to bring small gifts when they visit, ranging from seeds to shiny coins. This respect goes both ways; while riverfolk seldom farm or tend gardens, they

regard rivers with reverent consideration. Anyone showing cruelty to animals or polluting the rivers with filth or garbage are quickly introduced to the business end of a riverfolk pole.

Some riverfolk explore these bonds further, leaving the hectic river-trade lifestyle for a while and becoming rangers and druids with special interest in river ecology. Stories circulate about a riverfolk barge being helplessly ravaged in rapids, only to have the waters separate around it with one wave from a halfling druid aboard, and of greedy fishermen poaching fish in strained areas being overcome by schools of river sharks, the largest ridden by a riverfolk ranger.

River Workers

Away from the elven courts and Rothenian Plains, riverfolk are the most common halfings other races meet. They still labor under the stigma of being "little people" and get taken for servants, holdovers from their courtfolk cousins' dedication to indenture. As such, riverfolk have to fight for decent shifts in river docks across the big cities, and when they don't get overlooked entirely for crewing the barges and riverboats, they often get saddled with thankless cooking and cleaning work or used for their small size for hard-to-reach repairs. As much as they can, riverfolk prefer joining barges manned by their own kind, but riverfolk with the funding to run their own operations aren't common. The ones that do more often than not have patchwork boats put together with mixes of new material and those harvested from wrecked or decommissioned vessels—but if it floats, a riverfolk will make it work.

Riverfolk work hard on the docks, boats, and barges along the River Argent and the other major rivers through Krakova, Magdar, and the Seven Cities. The comings and goings of riverfolk from port to port means their population numbers are seldom counted, but they're there. They are fishermen, warehouse

workers, shipwrights, carpenters, smugglers, hucksters, pilots, and more, almost all of them eking out livings from the river or adjacent to it. A smattering of riverfolk can be found making a go at other professions inland, but the reasoning for sticking to the rivers is simple: they're good at it, and it's one of the few places a halfling might find respect.

The dream of many young riverfolk is to own their own river barge one day, whether freshly built or pieced together from scrap and determination. The great barges on the Argent are almost tiny kingdoms unto themselves with the captain as its monarch and where riverfolk rule is law. Not that most riverfolk have any interest in ruling anything, but it presents a unique opportunity to be able to live as they like and not be obligated to put up with any big folk nonsense. Other races finding themselves working on or with passage booked on a halfling barge ought to show a little respect: the riverfolk like to deal with rudeness by letting the river teach the manners.

Rivers of Shadow

As of late, new opportunities have been surfacing for the riverfolk barges. For those willing to move cargo down shadier corridors than even the most nefarious smuggling route, shadow fey coin is

being spent, and they're being very generous with it. In exchange for shifting cargo—not all of it mere objects—between Zobeck and the Shadow Realm via the river-bound shadow roads, a riverfolk barge captain can come into significant wealth and power. Despite the temptation, many suspicious riverfolk judge such bargains as too good to be true—just a case of some other type of elf finding a way to make halflings serve. They closely observe those who've made such deals, waiting and watching to see how quickly their newfound success flounders.

Eye on the Prize

Riverfolk are among the most adventuresome halflings in Midgard. They can be impressed with tales of daring, valor, and—maybe most of all—promises of terrific wealth. It takes effort to woo a riverfolk away from their rivers, but with a notion of buying their own boat,



buying their own dock, or simply elevating their kin out of criminal activity to survive, money makes a powerful lure. Their natural connections to the world make them potent druids and rangers, but their slippery, tough lot in life also lends them well to professions as a fighter, rogue, or scoundrelly bard.

Riverfolk Names

Riverfolk are an independent lot and often jostled about among other races, like it or not. To maintain cultural ties, they favor giving their children older names of their ancestors or clever riverfolk heroes (mostly smugglers and captains). These names give way to nicknames quickly, a means of maintaining some control in the world—big folk don't get the satisfaction of knowing their true names. Family names evoke a mix of natural themes and boat life and are combined elements from both mother and father. For example, if Margo Whitebottle and Rennie Halfknot have a son, they might name him Lothaire Halfbottle, called "Louie." Riverfolk believe honoring their ancestry is important and don't care if it makes their genealogy difficult for anyone else to follow.

MALE GIVEN NAMES AND NICKNAMES

Alain "Lain", Amaury "Murry", Augustin "Gus", Basile "Bas", Bertrand "Bert", Casimir "Cas", Corentin "Cory", Cyrille "Cy", Daniel "Dany", Diodore "Dio", Edgard "Eddy", Fabrice "Fabe", Francis "Frank", Gabin "Gabe", Ghyslain "Gish", Guillaume "Guy", Honore "Rene", Jeremie "Remy", Jonathan "Jon", Leonide "Leo", Lothaire "Louie", Marcellin "Marc", Maximilien "Max", Nicodeme "Nick", Osric "Oz", Placide "Cid", Raphael "Rafe", Renaud "Rennie", Rodolph "Rudy", Sylvestre "Sly", Theophile "Theo", Valerian "Val", Yezekael "Zeke"

FEMALE GIVEN NAMES AND NICKNAMES

Amandine "Amy", Apolline "Polla", Beatrice "Trixie", Cassandra "Cassie", Doriane "Dori",

Emilienne "Emma", Eveline "Evie", Florentine "Flora", Franseza "Frankie", Genevieve "Vivi", Giselle "Gigi", Gwendoline "Gwen", Heloise "Ella", Isabeau "Izzy", Jacqueline "Ketta", Jocelyn "Josie", Lilou "Lily", Lorette "Etta", Madeline "Maddy", Magalie "Mags", Majorlaine "Margot", Myriam "Ry", Nicolette "Nikki", Noemi "Em", Penelope "Penny", Rosemonde "Rosie", Roxanne "Roz", Syvilanne "Sylvie", Tiphaine "Tip", Victorine "Vicky", Zephyrine "Zee"

RIVERFOLK FAMILY NAMES

Argentford, Brookway, Craneship, Draughtbank, Eelprow, Finderfish, Greendrift, Halfeddy, Jetfrog, Knotreed, Loamford, Mistwood, Newtford, Otterflow, Prowflood, Quicknot, Riverbottle, Silverbrook, Turtlebarge, Underriver, Whitedrift, Youngwood

Riverfolk Halfling Traits

Riverfolk are city halflings, usually growing up on docks, fishing boats, and the patchwork barges. Most are more at home on a temperamental river than on solid ground, and riverfolk seldom fear drowning. Despite their urban natures, riverfolk maintain a strong connection with natural forces. Riverfolk halflings have the following two traits and one modification in addition to the standard halfling traits.

Alignment. Most riverfolk are somewhere between chaotic good and chaotic neutral. They are free spirits, independent-minded, and chafe beneath the rules and restrictions others place on them. Some emerge as underdog champions, climbing their way through society to make things better for others, while others prefer to enjoy what they can get from a society that doesn't want to give them anything.

Sure-Footed. You're tough and strong despite your small size, no stranger to hard work, labor, and working muscle against the will of

a river. Your Strength score is increased by 1. Additionally, you are adept at maintaining your balance on wet decks; you have advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to keep your balance. Slippery surfaces are not considered difficult terrain for you.

River's Child. You have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks to swim. Additionally, you add twice your Wisdom bonus on your Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks with advantage if the animal is native to rivers or nests in riverbanks. You can sense ley lines that cross or run parallel to a river within 1 mile of you but gain no other benefit to tap into or unlock it.

Riverfolk Feats

Riverfolk halflings have developed the following feats.

CONNECTIONS

Prerequisite: *Halfling (riverfolk), Charisma 10 or higher*

Riverfolk have many diverse kin scattered across river ports in the Crossroads. When you need something badly, you know if you just ask around enough, you'll find a cousin who knows someone who knows someone else who might be able to help you out:

- Increase your Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Whenever you are in an area with a halfling population, you can make a Charisma (Persuasion) check (DC 15 in areas with 1,000 or more halflings in residence, DC 20 if 100–999, and DC 25 if less) to get in touch with distant kin who can provide you with a service. As long as the particular service or item is available in the area, you can purchase it from your connection with a 5% reduction in cost for every 5 you exceeded the DC on your check. In regions with more courtfolk and winterfolk halflings, you may still make the check, but these connections are far

weaker; you have disadvantage on your Charisma (Persuasion) check.

- You can, at any time in a population center with halflings, make a Charisma (Persuasion) check against a DC 20 to see if you know anyone there. (Populations that are mostly courtfolk or winterfolk impose disadvantage on this roll.) If you succeed, you find someone you know who is friendly to you; they will not provide you aid of any significant gold value, but may share local information, directions, a free hot meal, or a place to sleep or hide for the night.

LEY FERRYMAN

Prerequisites: *Halfling (riverfolk), Intelligence or Wisdom 13 or higher*

All riverfolk can sense ley lines when they intermix with rivers, but most of your kin use this knowledge to show caution and respect. You prefer to refine this sense to take advantage of the paths that ley lines open up to you:

- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks to avoid becoming lost in any realm that contains ley lines.
- You do not incur a penalty on your Intelligence (Arcana) checks on Shadow Road Lore.
- While traveling a shadow road on a river, you reduce your travel time to a destination by 1d2 days + your Intelligence modifier (to a minimum travel time of 1 day).

UNDERFOOT

Prerequisites: *Small size or smaller, Strength 13 or higher*

You excel at tripping up taller races and sending them to the ground:

- Increase your Strength score by 1, to a maximum of 20.



- While wielding a quarterstaff or barge pole, you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks to trip a creature up to two sizes larger than you.
- If using the fighter class Trip Attack Battle Master maneuver with a quarterstaff or barge pole, your target has disadvantage on their Strength saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Riverfolk Equipment

Barge poles (or quant poles) are about 10 feet long with a cap at one end and a prong at the other. Primarily used to propel or steer barges through the water, the forked prong at one tip prevents the pole from sinking into muck in the riverbed. Barge poles can be wielded as a bludgeoning weapon or used to stab with the

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
<i>Simple Melee Weapon</i>				
Barge Pole	1 sp	1d6 bludgeoning	7 lb.	heavy, special, two-handed

prong for 1d4 piercing damage. Barge poles are clumsy weapons at best, even in the hands of riverfolk who have learned to wield them. In the hands of anyone but a riverfolk halfling, a barge pole is an Improvised Weapon and deals 1d4 bludgeoning damage. Riverfolk may wield barge poles as simple weapons.

Riverfolk Magic Items

Riverfolk halflings make special use of the following items.

RIVER TOKENS

Wondrous items, rare

These pebbles can be shaped like salmon, river clams, or iridescent river rocks. Regardless of the form, all give a distinctive shine in sunlight and radiate a scent of fresh, roiling water no matter how long it's been on dry land. These tokens seem sturdy with light handling but crumble easily if you attempt to crush them.

You can crush a token into a river to calm the waters ahead to a gentle current for 1 hour. Hostile creatures within the river or lairing on the riverbanks nearby (within 500 feet) are soothed by the power in the token. They must make Wisdom saving throws (DC 15) to be able to take any hostile actions for 1 hour; attacking an affected creature ends this effect immediately.

Once crumbled, the *river token* is consumed.

SMUGGLER'S COAT

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

When you attune yourself to this coat, it conforms to you in a color and style befitting your race and local culture. It has no visible pockets, but they appear if you place your hands against the side of the coat and expect pockets. Once your hand is withdrawn, the pockets vanish and take anything placed in them to an extradimensional space. A *smuggler's coat* can hold up to 40 pounds of material in up to 10 different extradimensional pockets. Nothing can be placed inside the coat

that won't fit in a pocket. You can withdraw a specific item at will; when reaching for it, the correct pocket appears.

If you desire, you can concentrate on keeping all pockets visible on the coat; there are four pockets, two on each side, on the outer coat, four on the inside, and two pockets in each sleeve. The pockets remain visible while you maintain concentration on doing so.

A *smuggler's coat* is resistant to most damage, but deliberately shredding it, incinerating it, or otherwise subjecting it to massive damage can obliterate the coat and everything in it, though an artifact inside a *smuggler's coat* will manifest elsewhere.

Detecting the magic of a *smuggler's coat* will not reveal the magical auras of any items it is containing.

Placing the coat within another extradimensional space, such as a *bag of holding*, or vice versa will destroy both items and create a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the *gate* is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.

Riverfolk Class Options

Riverfolk halflings have made certain classes all their own.

BARD: COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Those who have been burned by a bard of "the arts" know exactly what sort of art is conveyed by the name: the art of the swindle, the con, and the huckster.

Con artistry isn't a profession all riverfolk claim, but the ones who do are very good at it. Halflings are an underestimated lot, and their happy-go-lucky dispositions, size, and apparent harmlessness makes them easy to trust. These hucksters take advantage of these traits to humble the big folk. The more



noble ones among them are inclined to target haughty, greedy people who make life difficult for the lower classes, taking them down a few pegs to teach a lesson. Other hucksters, however, are more concerned with making money, and the only line they won't cross is swindling their own kin—if even that.

In seedy riverside taverns, on rollicking boat parties, or off in dens and bazaars of dubious repute, so often are bards of this college found. When one “artist” recognizes another, they are quick to swap tales and tricks and the names of previous marks and potential dupes they haven't gotten to yet. Unless of course the bards in question have made rivals of each other by lingering too long in a similar trade in the same place: then it can become a feud where one attempts to discredit the other before they *both* are found out.

MISDIRECTION

When you join the college of the arts at 3rd level, you learn the secret of keeping a target's eyes everywhere but on what your hands are doing:

- You gain proficiency in Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) if you do not have it already.
- You have advantage on any Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to engage in an act of legerdemain or manual trickery, such as to conceal an item, make it “disappear,” or plant an item elsewhere.
- As a bonus action, you can conceal or draw a light weapon that weighs no more than 1 pound.

FAST-TALK

Starting at 3rd level, you learn the secret that *what* you say matters less than how you say it. You can expend one use of Bardic Inspiration and spend your entire action talking to a target. Whether feigning acquaintance, asking questions, or simply jumping from one non-sequitur to another, your target must make a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failure, the target has the charmed

condition and disadvantage on Perception checks for as long as you continue talking, up to 1 minute (after the first round, treat this as maintaining concentration). Attacking the target breaks the effect immediately as does leaving the target's line of sight or rendering the target unable to hear or understand you. Potentially hostile actions the target notices allow another saving throw with advantage. The effect ends at the start of the target's turn once you stop speaking or lose concentration.

HECKLE

Beginning at 6th level, you can expend one use of Bardic Inspiration as a bonus action to heckle your target, a creature no more than 60 feet away from you, peppering them with insults, clever repartee, or actual rotten produce. Your target must make a Wisdom saving throw against your abuse. On a failure, the target subtracts an amount equal to your Bardic Inspiration die on their next attack roll, saving throw, or skill check, but the target gains advantage on their next attack roll against you. The effects only apply on the target's next roll.

MASTER OF LIES

Starting at 14th level, your lies and falsehoods have become so convincing that you yourself believe them half the time:

- Checks made against you to discern your deceptions have disadvantage.
- You have advantage on all Charisma (Deception) checks.
- Magical divinations from spells or items that can detect falsehoods or elicit the truth struggle to pierce your deception. Against such methods, you have advantage on any such effect that grants you a saving throw, and against effects without a saving throw, there is a 50% you are determined to be truthful and a 25% chance the effect refuses to function at all.

WINTERFOLK HALFLINGS: THE HIDDEN PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS

by Kelly Pawlik

The Small Folk of Domovogrod

The origins of the winterfolk are shrouded in mystery. Sightings of them are so rare in most parts of the world that some doubt they exist at all. Sages debate whether or not they were a distinct people prior to the Great Retreat or if they were once courtfolk or riverfolk halflings who broke away from their kin when the elves departed. It is assumed they were once loyal servants to the elves like the courtfolk, and they still bear a great deal of respect for elves and the elfmarked, though they have little love for the shadow fey.

Despite their scarcity, the winterfolk do exist. They dwell in the northern portions of the Rothenian Plains, particularly in the Duchy of Domovogrod, north of the Raven's Road. Before the fall of the Silver Mountain Kingdom, they lived in comfortable huts and burrows in the hills. When the giants sacked the kingdom, the winterfolk were driven from their homes into the rugged wilds. Because they are almost always encountered while they are hunting, many believe winterfolk are nomadic. They are not. Small communities of them hide their sod-roofed huts throughout the lowlands of the Tunturi Range, trusting the rugged terrain will keep intruders from finding them.

HEARTS OF ICE AND IRON

Winterfolk homes are devoid of comforts, befitting a people that has come to almost relish hardship. When their lives become too comfortable, winterfolk begin to fear they have upset their ancestors and the land. They seek out challenges with a zeal that appears suicidal to others.

Winterfolk rarely let their guard down because a lapse in attention can spell doom for themselves or their community. Like their courtfolk and riverfolk cousins, community means a great deal to winterfolk, and they will give no quarter to any creature that seeks to threaten the freedom and security of their settlement. Otherwise, winterfolk regard their southern kin with disdain and sadness. They view other halflings, perhaps erroneously, as frivolous, lazy, and selfish.

The life of a winterfolk child is as rugged as that of an adult. From the time they can walk, they are expected to keep up with their family. As soon as they have the strength to hold tools, fishing nets, or weapons, they are taught how to use them. Children are expected to hold their obligations to family and settlement above all other considerations.

Winterfolk are superstitious. When a relative dies, they are cremated holding four stones, two in each hand, and the ashen remains are kept in an urn in a quiet place.

A candle is burned in honor of a dead relative for four days following their death. On the fourth anniversary of the death, the winterfolk's cremated remains are divided into four parts and left to be scattered by the wind in four different locations. If these rituals can't be followed, winterfolk wisdom states that the dead will return as an ashen ghost to slay their still living family unto the youngest generation.

Women are held in slightly higher esteem than men within their settlements, and they tend to hold most positions of importance in their communities, though this is not universally true. All are expected to contribute equally to the family unit, and men are as likely to be found carrying young offspring with them in leather and fur slings while they work or hunt as women.

WINTERFOLK SETTLEMENTS

Winterfolk communities are most commonly found in the craggy foothills of the northern Rothenian Plains. Settlements are always small, rarely numbering more

than two dozen individuals sharing a few huts. Most colonies are comprised of a few intermarried families, and rarely are more than two or three generations represented.

Whatever crops the winterfolk can eke out of the unforgiving soil grow amidst the structures of the settlement. Winterfolk never plant recognizable fields, nor do they prune trees or bushes in the hopes that creatures passing through the territory mistake the chaotic jumbles of plants for wilderness rather than cultivated orchards and gardens.

Tools of the Winterfolk

The heart of each community is the forge. Winterfolk metalworking is done at low temperatures and most communities have at least one member capable of creating masterful coldforged items. Tools crafted by the winterfolk serve double duty as weapons as well. Farmers and herders are loath to overburden themselves by carrying spears



as well as spades, so the blades of shovels and trowels are keenly edged. Rakes, hoes, pitchforks, and picks are built sturdily enough to split skulls as well as stones.

The winterfolk have devised many tools that can be used to both work the land and fend off creatures that seek to harm them.

New Weapons

Many of the tools forged by the winterfolk can be used as weapons by simply substituting the closest approximation. A trowel acts as a dagger, a spade acts as a battleaxe, and a pitchfork acts as a trident, for instance. A few of the tools do not have easy approximations however and are detailed below.

Climbing Adze. This tool is made of a sharp, wide blade perpendicular to a short handle with a leather thong to loop over the user's wrist. In addition to peeling the bark from felled trees or removing buried stones from the soil, a pair of climbing adzes gives the wielder advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb.

Hand Trebuchet. The metal pocket of a hand trebuchet can be loaded with acid, alchemist's fire, holy water, or other small containers of liquid. See the appropriate entry for the ammunition used to determine damage and other effects. As a melee weapon, a hand trebuchet deals damage as a club.

Stone Rake. Settlers use stone rakes to remove rocks and other obstructions from the soil prior to planting or building temporary structures. In combat, a creature using a stone

rake can make a special melee attack to trip a creature up to two sizes larger, knocking it prone. When tripping a creature, the attacker makes a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the target's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (whichever is more advantageous for the target). If the attacker is able to make multiple attacks with the Attack action, the trip attack replaces one of them.

Whipsaw. A whipsaw is comprised of razor-sharp teeth loosely riveted together and attached to a T-shaped handle at each end. Used as a tool, a whipsaw allows single winterfolk to cut down a moderately sized tree relatively quickly and effortlessly. Used as a weapon, a whipsaw leaves grievous bleeding wounds that require medical attention to stanch. A creature that takes damage from a whipsaw loses 1 hit point at the beginning of each of its turns for 1 minute following the injury. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check or receiving any amount of magical healing stops the bleeding. When not in use, a whipsaw can be coiled and hung from its wielder's belt or pack.

Hidden Places

As befitting a race that values its privacy, the winterfolk hold a special reverence for several difficult to find locations scattered about the Rothenian Plains.

Anguished Spire. This impossibly narrow stone spire stands in the southeast foothills of the mountainous region of the Rothenian Plains, approximately 215 miles from the

NAME	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Martial Melee Weapons				
Climbing adze	6 gp	1d6 slashing	3 lb.	light
Stone rake	10 gp	1d8 piercing	5 lb.	versatile (1d10), special
Whipsaw	15 gp	1d8 slashing	2 lb.	finesse, special
Martial Ranged Weapon				
Hand trebuchet	4 gp	1d8 bludgeoning	3 lb.	ammunition (60/240), special

Winter Tree. The near-constant wind, blowing from the north, causes the spire to emit a ghastly howl that has been described by visitors as the howl of a colossal banshee. Visitors who are 5–200 feet away from the spire are deafened by the buffeting winds. Creatures within 5 feet of the spire find the air is calm and silent, even the movement of cloth and the rustle of grass underfoot is silenced. The spire was erected by elven magisters shortly before the Great Retreat and serves as a seal imprisoning the rubezahl (see *Tome of Beasts*) warlord Ghurrich and his army of lesser demons and dark fey. If the spire is substantially damaged or falls completely, Ghurrich's army will be released to wreak havoc on the region. Malicious fey often bedevil mortals that visit this location.

Fingers of Forgetfulness. The water running in this series of five short tributaries is sluggish, black, and deathly cold. The River Lethe taints this water, which is located approximately 50 miles northeast of the Winter Tree. Creatures who drink the water of the Fingers must succeed at a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. Such creatures forget everything they experienced during the week prior to drinking the water. An affected creature can make a new saving throw every 24 hours to overcome the effect and immediately remembers everything the poison caused them to forget. Winterfolk who have settled near the Fingers of Forgetfulness use the black water to poison their blades and arrowheads. A creature struck by a weapon treated with diluted black water must succeed at a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.

Unseen Grove. Nestled beneath the ground approximately 2 days travel northeast of Olersheim, this copse of stunted spruce trees is only accessible via a series of narrow tunnels. That trees survive in this place at all is only due to the finger-wide beams of sunlight that penetrate the cavern ceiling.

Penitent winterfolk travel here to confess their sins to the silent trees and sometimes bury evidence of their misdeeds. A narrow creek running with sweet, clean water bisects the grove like a fine silver thread. Sometimes the pilgrims visiting the grove aren't simply seeking peace of mind. Winterfolk who have fallen into banditry sometimes hide in the trees and victimize other visitors or simply wait for them to leave and dig up any valuable mementos left behind.

Vistag's Fall. Located at one of the highest points of the central Tunturi Range, over 10,000 feet above sea level, Vistag's Fall is rarely visited by civilized people. The accused winterfolk traitor Vistag Highbadger was executed for crimes he did not commit by being thrown from this cliff. Visitors to this location must scale a steep shale-covered trail lined by jagged rocks and hardy ferns. Climbers who examine the ferns closely can find skeletal evidence of people who failed the ascent or who have met the Falls' guardian. Vistag's wraith haunts this location every night, seeking to avenge his wrongful death by visiting his rage and malice upon any living creature he comes across.

New Feats

This section introduces a selection of feats that allow you to further explore your heritage as a winterfolk halfling.

GIANT-FOE

Prerequisite: Halfling (winterfolk)

You are a bitter enemy of the giants and their kin that have conquered the Silver Mountain Kingdom. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You do not have disadvantage on attack rolls using weapons with the heavy tag.
- When a giant scores a critical hit against you, it deals no additional damage.

PART OF THE PACK

Prerequisite: Halfling (winterfolk)

The wolves of Domovogrod are never seem to be far from your side and consider you to be a packmate. As an action, you can howl to summon a **wolf** to assist you. The wolf appears in 1d4 rounds and remains within 50 feet of you until 1 hour elapses or until it dies, whichever occurs first. You cannot control the wolf, though it will not attack you or your companions and will attack any creature you are engaging in melee combat. If you are level 4 or higher when you summon a wolf, there is a 50% chance you will summon a **dire wolf** instead. At the GM's discretion, you may not

be able to summon a wolf if you are indoors or in a region that wolves are not native to.

Once you have summoned a wolf with this feat, you must finish a long rest before you can summon another wolf.

RIMECASTER

Prerequisite: Halfling (winterfolk)

You have learned to adapt your elemental magic to reflect your northern heritage. You gain the following benefits:

- When you use your action to cast a spell, you can use your bonus action to change the type of damage the spell deals to cold damage.



- When you cast a spell that deals cold damage, you gain resistance to cold damage until the start of your next turn.

TUNDRA WALKER

Prerequisite: Halfling (winterfolk)

You are inured to the extreme cold temperatures of your frigid northern home.

You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Constitution score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You are adapted to cold environments, allowing you to automatically succeed on Constitution saving throws to avoid exhaustion while traveling through regions where the temperature is at or below 0 degrees Fahrenheit.
- If the frostbite and hypothermia conditions (see Midgard Hero's Handbook) are used, you automatically succeed on saving throws against nonmagical sources of them.
- You can move on slippery ice as though it were normal terrain.
- You do not contribute to the total weight when calculating the weight tolerance of thin ice you are moving across.

New Background

The new Silver Mountain Kingdom scout background is suitable for winterfolk halflings who hail from Domovogrod, though human and huginn characters from the region may find it suitable as well.

SILVER MOUNTAIN KINGDOM SCOUT

When the giants of the Northlands sacked the Silver Mountain Kingdom, you were one of the lucky few who escaped into the wider environs of Domovogrod. What you were before the invaders came is inconsequential. Now you spend your time planning and executing strikes against your conquerors. The harsh wilds of the north have melted any softness from your body and spirit, leaving only a hard determination as unforgiving as the mountains themselves.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Survival

Language: Giant

Equipment: A hunting trap, a tent, a tinder box, a cold weather outfit, and a pouch containing 10 gp

Feature: Emergency Supply Cache

While you are traveling in the Silver Mountains, you can find and use small supply caches left by other scouts. Caches are small by necessity with a value that doesn't exceed 5 gp.

d8 PERSONALITY TRAITS

- 1 I will return my people to this land.
- 2 The giants and their minions have ruined everything. We must stand against them.
- 3 The people of the south are soft and decadent. They cannot endure the trials we have.
- 4 We might as well drink and enjoy ourselves today. Our lives may be taken tomorrow.
- 5 I am death's architect. My weapons are the tools of my trade.
- 6 My will is steel. I am not scared, no matter the size of my enemy.
- 7 This land sustains and preserves us.
- 8 I will not fall until all evil has been exterminated from the world.

d6 IDEAL

- 1 **Pride.** My skill at arms is enough to gain me all I desire. (Neutral)
 - 2 **Hate.** My war starts with the giants, but it won't end until we slaughter all the savage races. (Evil)
 - 3 **Service.** My obligation to my family comes first, then my duty to my people. (Lawful)
 - 4 **Freedom.** I can do as I wish and roam where I may. No king or queen rules over me. (Chaotic)
 - 5 **Piety.** The gods spin our fates. We are but pieces in their games. (Neutral)
 - 6 **Partnership.** We must care for our companions and trust they will care for us. (Good)
-



d6 BOND

- 1 I will free my kin who are being held in Vellarsheim.
- 2 When I slay a giant, I keep one of its smallest finger bones.
- 3 My husband keeps the home fires lit while I ply my trade.
- 4 This spear has been handed down from parent to child in my family for generations. I will pass it to my first born when the time is right.
- 5 We are caretakers of the Winter Tree. If we preserve it, we earn passage to the Elflands.
- 6 Olersheim is the last bastion of civility in the region. I will protect it to the end.

d6 FLAW

- 1 I speak with contempt to people who are not from the north.
- 2 One never knows when they will be in need. I steal a small bit of food from every homestead I pass through.
- 3 I want to leave the north for warmer climates. We'll never reclaim the Silver Mountain Kingdom anyway.
- 4 I have killed travelers and made it appear as though giants were at fault.
- 5 I trust all the people of Domovogrod without question.
- 6 There is no law in the wilds. I will do as I wish with no fear of consequences.

A typical cache consists of enough rations for four people for one day, two full waterskins, two torches, plus a dagger, a quiver of 20 arrows, or a case of 20 crossbow bolts. You can find a cache by spending an hour searching. If you search for more than one cache in a seven-day period, the second takes two hours and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to find. The Wisdom (Survival) check DC increases by 5 for each cache sought after the second. For example, if you are searching for a fifth supply cache in a seven-day period, you must search for two hours and make a DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) check. If you use the caches left by other scouts but never leave

supplies for others to use, you risk gaining a negative reputation amongst your fellow freedom fighters.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Silver Mountain Kingdom scouts tend to be fatalistic with a grim sense of humor. When they allow themselves a rare respite from their struggle, they enjoy good food, strong drink, and other pleasures of the flesh. While they are executing an operation, scouts are focused and almost unshakeable in their determination to rid their homeland of the giants that plague it.

Winterfolk Magic

Spellcasters are rare amongst the winterfolk. Most take up professions as rangers, wanderers, and warriors, though some few join a druidic circle or a bard's college. Fewer still take up the mantle of a wizard or sorcerer, and the odd individual who trades power for service as a warlock is destined to become an outcast of his community. Despite their lack of magical mastery, the winterfolk have developed a small number of spells which are usually passed from master to apprentice.

Spell Lists

The spell lists are organized by class. Each spell also indicates its school, tradition, domain, pact, or other origin. Check with your GM to find out which spells are allowed in your campaign.

BARD SPELLS

2ND LEVEL

Lure Prey (winterfolk)

CLERIC SPELLS

3RD LEVEL

Hearth and Home (halfling)

6TH LEVEL

Spirit of the Hills (winterfolk)

DRUID SPELLS

2ND LEVEL

Lure Prey (winterfolk)

3RD LEVEL

Hearth and Home (halfling)

PALADIN SPELLS

5TH LEVEL

Unerring Mark (winterfolk)

RANGER SPELLS

2ND LEVEL

Lure Prey (winterfolk)

3RD LEVEL

Hearth and Home (halfling)

5TH LEVEL

Unerring Mark (winterfolk)

6TH LEVEL

Spirit of the Hills (winterfolk)

Spell Descriptions

These spells are well-known among the winterfolk, but rarely shared with outsiders.

HEARTH AND HOME

3rd-level conjuration (halfling)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (two warm pebbles)

Duration: 8 hours

While under the effects of this spell, your body radiates a pleasant heat to a range of 5 feet. For the duration, you do not gain levels of exhaustion from exposure to extreme cold weather or from the effects of extreme hunger or starvation.

At Higher Levels: Casting *hearth and home* using a spell slot of 4th level or higher allows you to affect one additional creature per level of the spell slot used. For instance, if you use a 5th-level spell slot to cast this spell, you can affect three creatures you touch.

LURE PREY

2nd-level enchantment (winterfolk) [ritual]

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 1 mile

Components: V, S, M (a wishbone)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

The location in which you cast this spell becomes too enticing for small game to resist. At the end of the casting time, the caster breaks the wishbone in two and places both

pieces on the ground. Within 2d6 minutes, 1d6 beasts of challenge rating 0 arrive at the spell location. The animals lured by the spell are all of the same type and are of species native to the region and environs in which the spell is cast. Creatures drawn to the location remain there for the duration or until attacked.

While usually cast to draw food creatures to a location, enterprising winterfolk just as often use *lure prey* to bring small creatures through locations they suspect are trapped or to use the summoned animals to distract or draw the attention of larger creatures.

At Higher Levels: If *lure prey* is cast with a 4th-level spell slot, at the caster's choice, it summons 2d6 beasts of challenge rating 0 or 1d6 beasts of up to challenge rating 1. If it is cast with a 6th-level spell slot, it summons 4d6 beasts of challenge rating 0 or 1d6 beasts of up to challenge rating 2.

SPIRIT OF THE HILLS

6th-level necromancy (winterfolk)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Ancestral energies surround and fill you, transforming you into a paragon of the winterfolk. While under the effects of *spirit of the hills*, you have advantage on attack rolls and saving throws. You also have resistance to cold and fire damage as well as bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.

If you fail a Constitution saving throw to maintain concentration on this spell, you can elect to take 1 point of exhaustion once the duration ends in order to maintain concentration on it. If you choose to stop concentrating on the spell, the ancestral spirits depart you in a rush, dealing 1d10 force damage per round remaining in the duration to all creatures within 15 feet of you. Creatures damaged by this use of the spell can make a Constitution saving throw to take half damage.

UNERRING MARK

5th-level divination (winterfolk)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (an arrowhead flecked with dried animal blood)

Duration: 1 round per level

You are suffused with the spirits of your ancestors, who guide your attacks. While under the effects of this spell, your ranged weapon attacks hit their target automatically with no attack roll. Targets with three-quarters cover or total cover are not affected by this spell. When calculating your ranged weapon damage, you subtract 1 from each damage die rolled to determine the total damage dealt. While under the effects of this spell, you cannot strike a critical hit against a creature with a ranged weapon attack.

At Higher Levels: If you cast this spell using a 6th-level spell slot, the decrease to your weapon's damage is negated, and you deal damage as normal for the weapon used. If you cast *unerring mark* using an 8th-level spell slot, all creatures standing within 10 feet of you gain the benefit of the spell when they make ranged attacks.

THE BUTCHER'S BILL: WARTIME CAREERS AND CREATURES IN MIDGARD

by Kelly Pawlik

No matter how sophisticated the civilized races of Midgard become nor how peaceful the times seem, the threat of war is never far off. Just in recent history, the vampires of Morgau and Doresh annexed the former Electoral Kingdom of Krakova whose ruling family in exile now wages an internecine war against their conquerors. In the Seven Cities, where war is a way of life with a specific season for waging it, the Mharoti Empire ceased to be merely a far-off threat when it seized the nearby Grand Duchy of Illyria. In the Wasted West, the scattered tribes of dust goblins are uniting under a single charismatic leader to bring death to the Seat of Mavros.

With the threat of battle never far off, the soldiers, officers, companies, and armies that hope to eke a profit from wartime are never hard to find. The following six specializations are particularly suited to different aspects of making war, though more traditional adventurers who hew to a strategic or warlike mindset will benefit from them just the same. Barbarians who choose the path of the herald learn to share their battle-lust among their companions. Bards from the College of Tactics learn how to inspire their troops to greater victories. Chaplains are fighters whose faith grants them the ability to spur their friends on in the face of adversity. Beast trainer rangers can create small armies out

of even the meanest creatures. Legionnaires are rogues who will fight to win, no matter the cost. And sappers are the ditch-digging, bridge-building rogues who keep the army's supply train moving.

Path of the Herald

(Barbarian Primal Path)

In northern lands, the savage warriors charge into battle behind chanting warrior-poets. These wise men and women collect the histories, traditions, and accumulated knowledge of the people to preserve and pass on. Barbarians who follow the Path of the Herald, who are sometimes called skalds, lead their people into battle chanting the tribe's sagas, spurring them on to new victories while honoring the glory of the past.

ORAL TRADITION

When you adopt this path at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in History and Performance. If you already have proficiency in one of these skills, your proficiency bonus is doubled for ability checks you make using that skill.

BATTLE FERVOR

Starting when you choose this path at 3rd level, when you enter a rage as a bonus action, you can expend one additional daily use of rage to allow up to three willing creatures

within 30 feet to enter a rage as well. The creatures must be able to see and hear you. Creatures affected by this feature gain the same benefits and restrictions you do when you enter a rage.

Battle fervor lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if you are knocked unconscious or if your turn ends and you either haven't attacked a hostile creature since your last turn or have taken damage since then. You can also end battle fervor on your turn as a bonus action.

LOREKEEPER

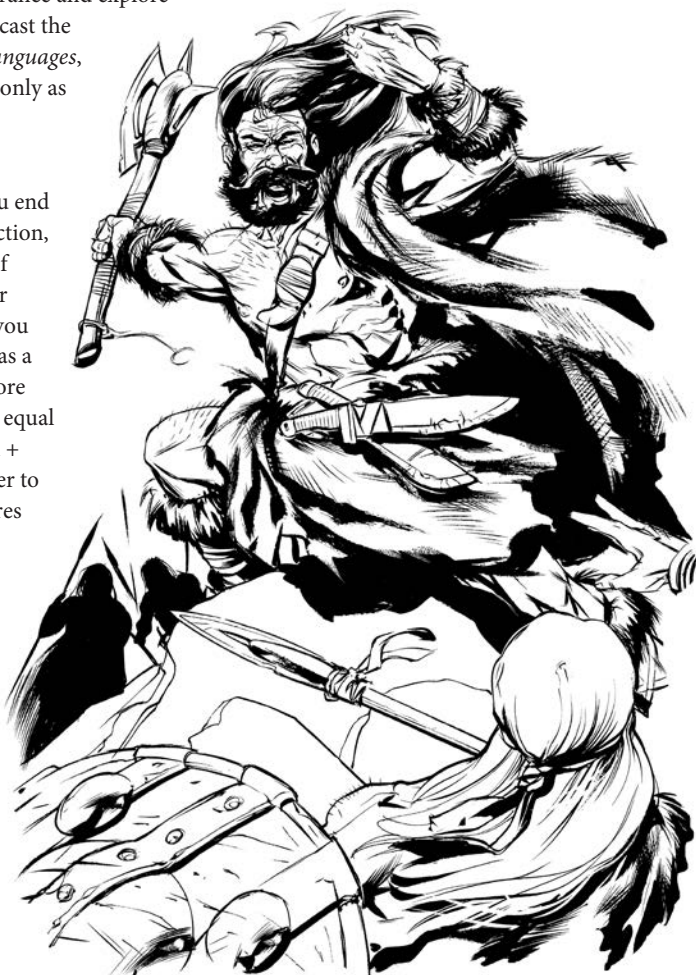
As a historian, you are well aware how much impact the past has on the present. At 6th level, you can enter a trance and explore your people's sagas to cast the *augury*, *comprehend languages*, and *identify* spells but only as rituals.

BOLSTERING CHANT

At 10th level, when you end your rage as a bonus action, you regain a number of hit points equal to your barbarian level \times 3. If you end your battle fervor as a bonus action, you restore a number of hit points equal to your barbarian level + your Charisma modifier to yourself and all creatures affected by it.

THUNDEROUS ORATORY

At 14th level, when you enter a rage, your attacks deal an extra 2d6 thunder damage. If you strike a critical hit, your target must succeed at a Strength saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier) or be pushed 10 feet away and knocked prone in addition to the extra damage. When you enter battle fervor, you and all the creatures affected by it deal an extra 1d6 thunder damage. If you or any of the affected creatures strikes a critical hit, the target must succeed on a Strength saving throw as calculated above or be pushed 10 feet away in addition to the extra damage.



COLLEGE OF TACTICS

(Bard College)

Bards of the College of Tactics are calculating strategists who scour historical records of famous battles for tricks they can use to give their own troops, and those of their patrons, an edge on the battlefield. Members of this college travel from war zone to combat site and interview the veterans of those engagements, trying to discern how the victors won the day and leveraging that information for their personal glory.

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

When you join the College of Tactics at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with medium armor, shields, and one martial weapon of your choice.

SETTING THE BOARD

Also at 3rd level, you can move your allies into more advantageous positions like moving the pieces on a game board. As a bonus action, you can roll a Bardic Inspiration die and multiply your result by 5 to determine how much distance in feet your allies can travel. You can then move any number of willing allies who can see or hear you the total amount of distance rolled in increments of 5 feet. For instance, rolling a 4 on your Bardic Inspiration die allows you to move one or more willing allies 20 feet. You could use that movement to move one willing ally 5 feet and another willing ally 15 feet or to move two willing allies 10 feet each.

Movement generated by this feature does not cause your allies to draw opportunity attacks.

SONG OF STRATEGY

Beginning at 6th level, when you choose a creature to benefit from your Bardic Inspiration, it also gains one of the strategies of your choice from the list below. The affected creature must use the strategy before the duration of the Bardic Inspiration die expires but can use it on the same turn it uses the Bardic Inspiration die.

Once a creature has used the selected strategy, it can't be used by the same creature again until it receives a new Bardic Inspiration die.

Bait and Bleed. When the affected creature uses its action to Dodge, it can make one melee attack against a creature that is within 5 feet of it.

Blitzkrieg. When the affected creature uses its action to Dash, it can make one melee attack at the end of its movement. If the attack is a critical hit, the targeted creature is frightened until the beginning of your next turn.

Counter Offensive. When the affected creature takes damage from another creature, it can use its reaction to make an attack against the attacking creature. The creature using this strategy must be wielding a weapon that can reach its attacker.

Distraction. When the affected creature uses this strategy, it can Disengage as a bonus action.

Hold Steady. When the affected creature uses its action to take the Ready action and the trigger for the readied action doesn't occur, it can make an attack or cast a spell after all other creatures have acted in the round.

Indirect Approach. When the affected creature uses its action to Help a friendly creature in attacking a creature within 5 feet of it, all other friendly creatures have advantage on their first attacks against the target creature.

Rest and Recovery. When the affected creature uses its Bardic Inspiration die, it can recover one use of one of its features that has a limited number of uses per day, such as a barbarian's Rage. A creature can't use this feature to recover a spell slot.

ABLATIVE INSPIRATION

Starting at 14th level, when you take damage from a spell that affects an area, you can use your reaction to redirect and dissipate some of the spell's power. If you succeed at the spell's

saving throw, all friendly creatures within 10 feet of you are also treated as though they succeeded at the saving throw. You expend one of your Bardic Inspiration dice when you use this feature.

Chaplain

(Fighter Archetype)

In the eyes of your companions, you are as much a counsellor and spiritual leader as you are a fellow warrior. Militaries and mercenary companies often contain members of various clerics among their ranks. These chaplains often come from religious sects whose tenets promote war, healing, peace, protection, or freedom, and they tend to the emotional and physical well-being of their companions.

STUDENT OF FAITH

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in either Insight or Religion.

TEND THE INJURED

Beginning at 3rd level, you can heal another creature you touch when you spend Hit Dice to regain hit points during a short rest, instead of applying the regained hit points to yourself. Additionally, the number of Hit Dice you regain after a long rest is equal to half your total number of them plus one. For instance, if you have four Hit Dice, you regain three spent Hit Dice upon finishing a long rest.

RALLY THE TROOPS

Starting at 7th level, you can urge your companions to overcome emotional and spiritual obstacles as an action. Any creature you consider an ally that can see and hear you can ignore the effects of being charmed and frightened for 1 minute.

At 10th level, your allies can also ignore the effects of being incapacitated as well as one level of exhaustion.

At 15th level, your allies can also ignore the effects of being stunned as well as a total of

two levels of exhaustion in addition to the conditions listed above.

At 17th level, your allies can also ignore the effects of being paralyzed as well as a total of three levels of exhaustion in addition to the conditions above.

If a creature affected by this feature is already suffering from one of the conditions they can ignore, that condition is suppressed for the duration and resumes affecting them once the duration expires. Once you have used this feature, you must finish a short or long rest to use it again.

FIELD MEDIC

When you reach 10th level, you can spend one of your Hit Dice to regain hit points as an action. The hit points regained with this feature can be applied to yourself or to another creature you touch.

If you spend Hit Dice to recover hit points during a short rest, any hit points regained that exceed your hit point maximum, or that of the creature being tended to, can be applied to another creature.

When you finish a short rest, you regain one spent Hit Dice.

RALLY POINT

Beginning at 15th level, when you see one of your allies take damage, you can use your reaction to move that creature toward you to a maximum distance of its speed. The player of the affected character, or the GM if an NPC is being moved, can choose the path traveled but must ensure the creature is closer to you at the end of this movement than it was at the beginning of the movement.

HOSPITALER

Starting at 18th level, you recover a number of spent Hit Dice equal to 1/4 of your total Hit Dice when you finish a short rest. Additionally, you recover all your spent Hit Dice when you finish a long rest.

Beast Trainer

(Ranger Archetype)

People have used animals in their war efforts since time immemorial. As a beast trainer, you teach animals how to fight and survive on the battlefield. You also train them to recognize and obey the other people in your unit. While a beast trainer can train any type of animal, they often generate a strong bond with one species and focus their training on beasts of that type.

BEAST WHISPERER

Starting at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in Animal Handling. If you are already proficient in this skill, your proficiency bonus is doubled when you use it.

TRAINED ANIMALS

Beginning at 3rd level, when you take this archetype, choose a beast that is Medium and has a challenge rating equal to 1/4 your level, rounded down, or lower. This beast takes its turn on your initiative and obeys your commands. As a bonus action on your turn, you can use gestures and verbal commands to order your beast to move up to its movement speed and take one of the following actions: Attack, Dash, Disengage, Dodge, or Help.

If you are knocked unconscious, killed, or otherwise unable to command your trained animal, one of your allies can command it by using a bonus action to make a DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

When you reach 7th level, you can have more than one trained animal at a time. All your trained animals must be of the same type and can have a total challenge rating equal to 1/4 of your level, rounded down. A beast with challenge rating 0 is considered to have a challenge rating of 1/8 for the purpose of determining the number of trained animals you can have. You can use a bonus action to direct all your trained animals to take the same action, or you can use an action to command them to take different actions.

In order to use this feature, you must practice and play with your animals daily, focusing your attention on them: this expends one spell slot of the highest level you have.

BESTIAL FLANKER

At 7th level, when you and one of your trained animals Attack the same creature, your trained animal has advantage on its attack roll.

BRED FOR BATTLE

Starting at 11th level, when you practice with your trained animal, you may expend a second spell slot each day of the highest level you have in order to give your trained animal resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons. Additionally, you can choose Large beasts when you select your trained animals.

PRIMAL WHIRLWIND

At 15th level, when you command your trained animal to use the Attack action, it can make an attack against every creature within 5 feet of it. If you have more than one trained animal, you choose one of them to use this feature.

Legionnaire

(Rogue Archetype)

Sinners, scoundrels, cheats, and killers, legionnaires live hard and die harder. For some, mercenary life is not a choice, it is the reward for a lifetime of burglary, swindling, poaching, and worse crimes. Criminals whose misdeeds are not awful enough to warrant execution are often conscripted to mercenary companies and foreign legions where their wits and tenacity are put to use fighting wars they have no stake in.

FORCED MARCH

Starting at 3rd level, when you travel more than 8 hours in a day, you do not need to make a Constitution saving throw for each additional hour travelled and do not gain levels of exhaustion due to your travel pace.

LAST LAUGH

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you can use your reaction to make a Sneak Attack against a creature that reduces you to 0 hit points or kills you outright. You have advantage on your attack, and your attack is resolved after the attack against you, using one of the weapons you are wielding. You can't make a last laugh attack against a creature you can't reach.

IRON GULLET

Beginning at 9th level, you can stomach almost anything. You have resistance to poison damage, and you have advantage on saving throws against being poisoned. If you already have a feature that grants you these benefits, such as dwarven resilience, you automatically succeed at any subsequent saving throws you make to end that instance of being poisoned.

CHEAT DEATH

When you reach 13th level, you can reroll any result of a 1 or 2 when you roll a Hit Die to regain hit points. Additionally, you can deny death. When you are reduced to 0 hit points or are killed outright, you are instead reduced to 2d8 hit points, though you can still use your last laugh feature. Once you have used this feature to deny death, you must finish a long rest to do so again.

LAST STAND

At 17th level, you endure beyond mortal limits. When reduced to 0 hit points, you remain standing. When you succeed at a death saving throw, you can act as normal and have advantage on attack rolls. When you fail a death saving throw, you can only move and use your bonus action and reaction.

Sapper

(Rogue Archetype)

You focus as much on identifying the weak points of structures as on the weak points of creatures. Sappers are deployed with the soldiery to dig trenches, build bridges, and breach defenses. When troops move into a heavily defended area, it's your job to make it happen as efficiently as possible.

COMBAT ENGINEER

When you select this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in alchemist's supplies, carpenter's tools, mason's tools, and tinker's tools. Using these tools, you can do or create the following.

ALCHEMICAL BOMB

As a bonus action, you can mix together volatile chemicals into an explosive compound. Your bomb has a range of 30 feet and deals 1d6 force damage to all creatures in a 10-foot cube. You can use your bombs to deal Sneak Attack damage to objects and constructs. A creature hit by your bomb can succeed at a Dexterity saving throw (DC 8 + your Intelligence modifier + your proficiency bonus) to halve the damage dealt. Alchemical bombs lose potency and become inert 1 minute after they are created.

Your bomb's damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 9th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

JURY RIG FORTIFICATION

With 1 minute of work you can:

- Create a low wall, large enough to provide half cover to a medium size humanoid.
- Dig a 5-foot-long, 3-foot-wide trench to a depth of 3 feet.
- Build a 5-foot-long, 3-foot-wide ladder. Each additional minute spent on this option increases the length of the ladder by 5 feet. The ladder built is sturdy enough to be used as a bridge.



TYPE OF TRAP	TIME REQUIRED TO BUILD TRAP	TIME REQUIRED TO SET TRAP
Collapsing Roof	5 minutes per 5-ft.-by-5-ft. section	When you have finished building this trap, it is considered set
Falling Net	1 minute	1 action
Hunting Trap	1 minute	1 bonus action
Pit	5 minutes for a 10-ft.-deep simple pit 15 minutes for a 10-ft.-deep hidden pit 1 hour for a 10-ft.-deep locking pit. Add 1 minute to add spikes to a pit.	When you have finished building this trap, it is considered set: 1 bonus action to reset a simple pit or locking pit; 1 action to reset a hidden pit

If there is insufficient available material or the ground is too hard to work, the GM may rule that you can't use this option.

HASTILY TRAP AN AREA

You can create and set some types of traps quickly. The chart on the following page indicates the timeframes required to build and deploy commonly used traps. At the GM's discretion, you may be able to use this feature to make and use other types of traps.

SCULPT TERRAIN

Beginning at 3rd level, you can target the floor or ground with your alchemical bombs. The area targeted and all areas within 5 feet of it are considered difficult terrain.

You also gain an additional way to use your Sneak Attack: you can use your Sneak Attack against a creature standing in or moving through difficult terrain you have created.

BREACH DEFENSES

Starting at 9th level, when you target an object, you ignore 5 points of its damage threshold. For instance, if you target a door that has a damage threshold of 10, its damage threshold is only 5 against your attacks.

At 13th level, you can ignore 10 points of an object's damage threshold, and at 17th level, you can ignore 15 points of an object's damage threshold.

If an object doesn't have a damage threshold or if this feature reduces its damage threshold to 0, you can deal sneak attack damage to it.

CLEAR THE PATH

At 13th level, you have advantage on checks to disarm traps. If you fail a check made to disarm a trap, it doesn't trigger even if its description states otherwise. In addition, you can disarm a trap as a bonus action.

ALL CLEAR

Beginning at 17th level, as an action, you can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to declare a 50-foot-square area safe

to travel through for 1 minute. Mechanical and magical traps will not be triggered for the duration. Additionally, difficult terrain will not impede your movement or the movement of any creature that can see and hear you that you consider an ally.

Once you have used this feature, you must finish a short or long rest to use it again.

Creatures of War

Intelligent creatures have used beasts and birds as implements of war since the concept of warfare was invented. Easy to train animals are used as mounts, messengers, weapons, and sometimes even siege engines if the creature is large enough. Appendix A of the *Monster Manual* contains statistics for numerous beasts that one might find on a battlefield. The beasts on the following pages are trained to thrive in a warzone. Many of them can be used by the animal trainer ranger archetype's Train Animal feature detailed earlier in this book.

TRAINING A BEAST FOR BATTLE

You can use Wisdom (Animal Handling) to train a beast with an Intelligence of 2 or 3. Doing so requires the beast you desire to train and one week of training per point of challenge rating (minimum one week). During training weeks, six to eight hours per day must be spent with the animal being trained. The DC of the Wisdom (Animal Handling) check varies depending on the purpose you are training the beast for, but training a juvenile animal that has been separated from its parents gives you advantage on the check.

Basic Combat Training (Training DC 10). An animal with this training does not get spooked or flee when they are in an area of conflict. The animal knows which humanoids are friendly to it and which ones aren't, even in a pitched battle. The animal will take commands

from up to two humanoids. These designated humanoids can command the animal to Attack, Defend, Disengage, or Help by using an action to make a DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

Advanced Combat Training (Training DC 15). An animal with advanced combat training gains all the benefits of basic combat training, plus it will take commands from up to four humanoids rather than just two. In addition to the commands learned in basic combat training, the designated humanoids can command the animal to Dash, Dodge, Hide, Ready, or Use an Object. The Use an Object command can be used to deliver an object to another character or fetch it from a willing character or the environment. If possible, the animal remains on the field of battle until all of the humanoids friendly to it have left the area.

Deliver Message (Training DC 15). This animal can deliver a written message that has been attached to it to one of up to four specific locations, humanoids, or both, in any combination. One of the locations or humanoids must be designated as the messenger animal's home. For example, a messenger falcon can be trained to deliver messages to its trainer (designated as the animal's home), its trainer's spouse, a tower in its trainer's home city, and a garrison 150 miles away from its trainer's home city. Once the message is delivered, the messenger animal will take a long rest before returning to its home. An animal in basic or advanced combat training can be trained to deliver messages as part of that training. Doing so increases the total DC of training the animal by 5.

Mount (Training DC 10). This animal has been trained to allow a humanoid of up to one size smaller than it to ride it and direct its movements. An animal in basic or advanced combat training can be trained as a mount as part of that training. Doing so increases the total DC of training the animal by 1.

Scout Area (Training DC 12). This animal has been trained to scout ahead and report back to its sender. The beast will maintain a range of 50–100 feet from its sender in a direction designated by the sender. The animal will then return to its sender to quietly report if it detects any dangers in the area scouted. If the animal is attacked, it returns to its sender immediately. An animal in basic or advanced combat training can be trained to scout an area as part of that training. Doing so increases the total DC of training the animal by 3.

WAR ANIMALS

A wide variety of creatures find new roles during war.

CAVALRY CAMEL

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (light barding)

Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

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

Spit (Recharge 5–6). The cavalry camel spits a nauseating wad of phlegm at a single target within 15 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of its next turn.

In the deserts of the Southlands, a cavalry camel is worth its weight in exotic spices.

Aggressive to others but loyal to their masters, these combat-trained beasts are as much a weapon as a mount and will fight to the death to protect their riders if they are dismounted. Cavalry camels are

usually single-humped dromedaries, though double-humped camels are not unknown on the battlefields of the South.

HOMING PIGEON

Tiny beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Messenger. When a message tube is attached to its leg, the homing pigeon flies directly to a single specified location.

ACTIONS

Peck. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

This tiny two-tone grey bird has black speckles on its wings, black bands on its body, and a piercingly intelligent look in its eyes. As it moves, the small feathers on its neck take on an almost metallic sheen.

Military field commanders have used homing pigeons to send messages from the front to their superiors for centuries. The animals are prized for their relative intelligence and their uncanny ability to navigate to message delivery sites. If the homing pigeon has been trained using the rules in Training a Beast for Battle, above, it can deliver messages to its designated people or locations with its Messenger feature.

MEGARAPTOR

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d12 + 30)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The megaraptor makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its scythe claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Scythe Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Prehistoric titans still walk the hidden jungle reaches of the Southlands. Despite being almost thirty feet in length, megaraptors are speedy, agile, and relatively light, weighing only 1 ton. Unlike other raptors, with their sickle-clawed feet, megaraptors have a footlong scythe claw on their forelimb that they use to dispatch their prey. Some Southlands tribes know the secret of raising and training megaraptors and use them as mounts and beasts of war.

PYGMY WOOLLY RHINOCEROS

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Hustle. The pygmy woolly rhinoceros can Dash as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Primarily found in arctic climes, the pygmy woolly rhinoceros is a mastiff-sized pachyderm covered in shaggy brown, gray, or black fur. They are curious and social, though they can be aggressive when they or their offspring are threatened. Pygmy woolly rhinoceroses are as intelligent as a dog and can be trained for battle or even to perform tricks such as fetching or jumping. Some northern-dwelling halflings and dwarves use these rhinoceroses as mounts and beasts of burden.

OLIPHAUNT, WARBEAST

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	9 (-1)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Foul Temper. All Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to calm down the oliphaunt have disadvantage.

Siege Beast. If the oliphaunt uses its trampling charge against an object, it ignores the object's damage threshold. If the oliphaunt reduces an object's hit points to 0, all enemy creatures within 10 feet of it must make a DC 9 Charisma saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn.

Trampling Charge. If the oliphaunt moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the oliphaunt can make one stomp attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Tusks. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d10 + 8) slashing damage.

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 feet, one prone creature. *Hit:* 34 (4d12 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

An oliphaunt is a massive pachyderm with four scimitar-like tusks and a thick gray-brown hide covered with patches of coarse black hair. Its trunk is short and sits above a large maw full of sharp teeth. Large round ears lie hanging at the sides of its head.

Juvenile oliphaunts are often trained for war and are prized among the armies of the Southlands for their ability to breach the defenses of enemy fortifications.

PIT TERRIER

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 12)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The pit terrier has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage and the target must succeed at a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) contest against the pit terrier's attack roll or be grappled by the pit terrier.

This low-slung dog has a compact, muscular body covered in short fur. Its legs are short and widespread, giving the dog a very low center of gravity. Its head is large and somewhat flat with a pronounced underbite and sharp-looking teeth jutting from the lower jaw.

Pit terriers have been bred as dogs of war. They are fiercely loyal to their masters and will fight to the death to keep their masters from harm. Despite their fierce reputations, in times of peace, pit terriers are as friendly as any other species of dog, making them ideal pets.

WAR PIG

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Charge. If the war pig moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 3 (1d6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Frightful Squeal. As a bonus action, the war pig can emit a loud, high-pitched squeal. Beasts within 15 feet of the war pig must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its next turn. Once a beast has made the saving throw, it is immune to all war pigs' frightful squeals for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

This muscular, human-sized swine is covered with bristly brown and grey hair. A pair of long curved tusks juts from its lower jaw.

War pigs are the bane of cavalry and other army units that make extensive use of animals. Often the war pigs are untrained. Officers of the army using them simply keep them penned in a dark, covered area until they are needed and set them loose on the enemy army immediately prior to their

own army's advance. Some less scrupulous commanders douse their war pigs with pitch and set them aflame before spurring them toward the enemy. Such an incendiary war pig takes 3 (1d6) fire damage each round but deals 3 (1d6) fire damage to any creature that makes a melee attack against it.

WOLVERINE

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 48 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 25 ft., burrow 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wolverine makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage. If the wolverine hits the same creature with both claw attacks in the same round, it rends the target, dealing an extra 3 (1d6) slashing damage.

This shaggy, low-slung animal looks like the offspring of a badger and a grizzly bear. Its short, broad muzzle is filled with small teeth, and each paw is tipped with five long, ragged claws.

Some Dwarven armies use wolverines to burrow underneath enemy holdings and fortifications. Once these fierce creatures have emerged inside enemy lines, they act as shock troops, softening up the enemy while the army uses the tunnel the wolverine burrowed to move its forces into place.

FOR CANTON AND GLORY: THE IRONCRAG WAY OF WAR

by Ben McFarland and Robert Fairbanks

The Ironcrag rise out of central Midgard, a stony sword thrust toward the heavens and the homeland of numerous dwarven clans that migrated from the Northlands. They found the mountains rich and verdant and established many scores of canton strongholds throughout the peaks and valleys. While dwarven culture became more urbane and political, the dwarves never lost their taste for combat and martial activities. Mercenary companies created by younger dwarves and aging veterans unwilling to retire quietly march out early each spring to earn fortunes and hard-fought experience on the battlefield. The cantons benefit from those who return, gaining an influx of blooded veterans, strategy, and treasure.

Mustering and Marching

Never ones to shy away from combat, Ironcrag mercenary companies gather in the canton of Tijano, mustering and recording their heraldry with the priests of Volund before marching out to serve under the banners of the Septime Cities throughout that region's Season of War.

While this tradition does provide valuable combat experience, it also provides dwarves the opportunity to take captives, pressing them into service as thralls for 10 years. The custom discourages others from attacking the

Ironcrag, both for fear of becoming a thrall and for concern on the safety of countrymen held as thralls. Thralls are fed and cared for, worked hard but not beaten, generally receiving a tattoo or brand on the shoulder to mark their status, and live a decade of hard labor before being released. Dwarven law dictates all slaves have the right to sustenance, shelter, and life, and they are permitted to complain to a magistrate if denied food or to accuse a dwarf of killing a slave.

As warriors, the Ironcrag Free Companies enjoy excellent reputations for steadfast dedication, the ability to endure harsh conditions without complaint, and being ferocious combatants. Their shorter stature almost never plays a role, and they often match their allies' marching pace while wearing heavier armor. However, dwarven mercenaries are also known for using any advantage they can find on the battlefield. They love using the terrain to their advantage and performing night operations, using their darkvision and discipline to work from the shadows when an enemy might otherwise be blind.

Tools of the Trade

Two new weapons presented here, the chain hook and the Dolen axe, offer maneuvers to make combat more interesting, called Weapon Options. Weapon Options appear

in *Midgard Heroes Handbook* and unless specified otherwise can be used by any character as long as they're wielding the appropriate weapon and are proficient with it. If a maneuver requires a creature to make a saving throw, the DC equals 8 + the attacker's proficiency bonus + the attacker's Strength or Dexterity modifier (attacker's choice). Unless specified, these maneuvers have only their listed effect and don't deal weapon damage.

CHAIN HOOK

This unusual and multipurpose weapon greatly resembles a robust, utilitarian interpretation of the Cathayan yawanga. Its development and use among canton mercenary companies is uncertain but may have traveled west with merchants or explorers. Consisting of 6–9 feet of hefty chain and terminating in an iron weight set with a bladed hook, this weapon can be used to attack, unhorse, and even occasionally disarm opponents.

You have disadvantage when attacking creatures within 5 feet of you.

WEAPON OPTION: DISARM

When a creature attacks you with a weapon, you may use your reaction to catch their weapon and attempt to disarm them. Make an attack roll with your chain hook. If the result of this roll equals or exceeds their attack roll, their attack misses, and they must succeed on a Strength saving throw or drop their weapon.

WEAPON OPTION: TRIP

As an attack while you are wielding a chain hook, you may entangle your opponent's legs, attempting to trip them. Make an attack roll against a Large or smaller creature. If the attack hits, the creature must succeed on a Strength saving throw or fall prone. If mounted, they have advantage on this saving throw; failure means they are pulled to the ground, prone.

DOLEN AXE

Named after the clan which popularized them, a Dolen axe has a shorter haft than a standard battle axe, a reinforced spike on the head, and a heavy, counter-weighted pommel. Balanced to be usable with one hand or two, many northern canton warriors prefer the Dolen



NAME	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Chain hook	15 gp	1d6 slashing	3 lb.	special, reach, thrown (range 10/30)
Dolen axe	15 gp	2d4 slashing	6 lb.	heavy, versatile (1d10)

axe, and its prominent spike occasionally serves as a makeshift guidon for units in areas with lower ceilings, like warren tunnels.

WEAPON OPTION: BRACED RECEPTION

As an action, you can set your axe against a charge. If a creature moves at least 20 feet straight toward you and attacks, you may use your reaction to make an attack with the spike of the Dolen axe. If this attack hits, it does double damage, and both you and the target must make a Strength saving throw. Creatures failing this saving throw fall prone (and fall off their mount if mounted).

WEAPON OPTION: HAFT LOCK

When a creature attacks you with a weapon, you may use your reaction to attempt locking their blade with the haft of your axe, parrying the attack. Make an attack roll with your Dolen axe with advantage if you wield it with both hands. If the result of this roll equals or exceeds their attack roll, their attack misses.

WEAPON OPTION: POMMEL SMASH

As a reaction, you may slam an attacking foe with the weighted pommel, leaving the target gasping for breath. Make an attack roll; if the result exceeds their attack roll, the next attack against the target has advantage. You must have the Dolen axe in hand to take this action.

Alchemical Creations

Many dwarven alchemists begin their careers as guild artisans or merchants only to be bitten by the desire for adventure, whether to fund their research, to acquire rare components, or to seek out rare or lost knowledge necessary to improve their craft. Ironcrag alchemists are renowned for their various concoctions, sometimes inspired by or reverse-engineered from foes' weapons.

Ghoul Saliva Paste. Collected from captive ghouls and mixed with compounds that preserve and concentrate its efficacy, ghoull



SPECIAL MATERIAL: SOULBOUND STEEL

Steel forged with the ashes of the fallen dead, first pickled in ale and cremated through special ritual to Ninkash, creates a special alloy known as soulbound steel, said to contain a sliver of the spirit of the warrior rendered into ashes. The strong, flexible metal has a light grey color and a beautiful, powdery finish, sometimes worked into frost-like patterns. Armor is not usually made of soulbound steel although rarely a buckler or shield is forged. Other items not primarily of metal are not

meaningfully affected by being partially made of soulbound steel: a longsword can be a soulbound weapon while a staff cannot. When wielding a weapon made from soulbound steel, once per long rest, the bearer may use their reaction to roll a saving throw with advantage against a mind-affecting spell, effect, or ability. A character can only benefit from a soulbound steel item once per long rest, regardless of how many they possess. These weapons cost an additional 500 gp to create.

saliva paste is smeared on weapons as a contact poison. When a creature attacked by a treated weapon suffers damage, they must make a DC 10 Constitution save or be paralyzed for one minute. An application is good for two successful attacks and can be put on one Medium weapon or ten pieces of ammunition. **Cost:** 50 gp per application.

Sloughide Dissolvent. This clear, gelatinous liquid is kept in specially prepared porcelain spheres designed to be thrown or in a brass and crystal bombard to be fired in a spray. Targets hit with the liquid must make a DC 13 Constitution save or be paralyzed and suffer 1d6 acid damage. This damage continues until a successful saving throw, five rounds have passed, or the target is doused with a gallon of wine. **Cost:** 75 gp (sphere), 350 gp (bombard: 30-ft line, refillable, 75 gp per refill).

Ironcrag Cultural Options

Several backgrounds remain iconic to the lands of the Ironcrag dwarves, different from the Northlands clans or their Nurian cousins. Ambitious and industrious, travelers familiar with all three cultures say the Ironcrag feel like a blending of the northern reavers' martial attitudes with the southern artisans' ingenuity. These backgrounds represent options for characters hailing from the cantons.

BACKGROUND VARIANT SOLDIER: IRONCRAG CANTON MERCENARY

Whether you were a member of the Firethroat Regulars, Ironcrag Exiles, Free Peshvai Axes, Rampant Bear Company, or Trollbane Lances, you mustered in Tijano and crossed the passes to fight in the lowlands against the armies of the Septime Cities and beyond. You know what it means to be in an organized military company for hire and what the duties, responsibilities, and expectations are for a member of a mercenary band.

Languages: Pick two additional languages—from a choice of Darakhul, Draconic, Enochian, Kariv, Minotaur, Northern Tongue, or Nurian. This replaces the Soldier background's tool Proficiencies.

VARIANT FEATURE: FRIENDS IN STRANGE PLACES

Mercenaries from the Ironcrag can be stationed far and wide and have no qualms about serving with auxiliaries of different nationality or heritage as long as the pay is good. When in a larger town or settlement, you can spend a few hours finding either dwarven mercenaries, veterans, active duty troops, or sellswords who have previously served with one of the Free Companies. As brothers in arms, they're willing to provide you and a small group of friends a safe place to stay for the night, an introduction to a local individual who might be able to assist with your current business, or insider information about a particular event, location, or person of interest. They might permit you to borrow a piece of equipment temporarily or use a workshop but will not risk their lives.

BACKGROUND VARIANT URCHIN: FORMER TEN-YEAR THRALL

In what feels like a different lifetime, you were a soldier or simply someone caught up in the wrong place who fought against dwarven mercenaries, either defending another land or as part of a retributive raid, and lost. Dwarven troops captured and pressed you into a decade of hard labor and unwilling service before releasing you. You know about their rules regarding treatment and hospitality and can easily comment about their life and customs.

Skill Proficiencies: Pick one (Animal Handling, Athletics, Insight, or Nature) and Stealth

Tool Proficiencies: Alchemical, Farming, or Mining tools

Languages: You may add Dwarvish to your list of spoken languages

Equipment: Your equipment may contain a keepsake of little or no value, a reminder of your time in the cantons, if you desire.

VARIANT FEATURE: SHARED EXPERIENCE

You know a web of decent people who were formerly thralls and can rely on them to get messages or even small packages safely across vast distances. You can also occasionally reach out to this network to find an uncommon product, an unusual sage or guide, or a ship captain going to your destination and willing to take on passengers. Should you ever remove your tattoo or branding mark for some reason, you will need to make a successful DC 13 Diplomacy check prior to using this feature. You have advantage on checks to determine something about dwarven culture.

TRICK FIGHTER (FEAT)

You are very adept at special maneuvers with your weapons. When performing a Weapon Option attack, you gain the following benefits:

- +2 to hit on attack rolls for Weapon Options.
- +1 to the DC to resist Weapon Option effects if applicable.
- If your proficiency bonus is +3 or higher, you gain an extra reaction each combat round which may only be used for Weapon Option attacks.

Riding into War

With their broad experience in the conflicts of Central Midgard, the seasoned dwarfs realized the benefit of mounted troops in lowland war but wanted an option also providing an edge against underground foes. Units of badger riders developed as a result.

FIGHTER: IRONCRAG BADGER RIDER MARTIAL ARCHETYPE VARIANT

Certain of the Free Companies among the cantons are renowned, fortunate, or wealthy enough to employ a unique type of cavalry: badger riders. These elite, mobile infantry units consist of an Ironcrag war-badger with one or sometimes two riders. Serving not just as mounted shock troops, badger riders specialize in long-range reconnaissance and as sappers. They are especially feared for their burrowing ambush and all-terrain, night fighter tactics. They rightfully remain among the most dreaded soldiery found among the cantons.

Serving in one or more of these prestigious mercenary companies, you've established the loyalties and relationships, martial prominence and coin enough, to earn the right to claim as your own one of these rare and "respected" war steeds. This archetype modifies the griffon knight archetype (see *Midgard Heroes Handbook*).

WAR-BADGER MOUNT

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain a trained Ironcrag war-badger as your mount. Loyal to you but savage and unpredictable toward others, your war-badger is bonded to you and fights to protect you in battle. Use the war-badger statistics, but each time your proficiency bonus increases (at 5th level, 9th level, and so on), add +1 to your badger's AC, saving throws, and attack bonus and increase its hit point maximum by 10. Your mount obeys your commands to the best of its ability, taking its turns on your initiative. It moves and acts as you direct it with just 3 action options (Dash, Disengage, and Dodge). If you want the badger to attack, you must use your action to command the badger to do so; this allows it to use the Attack action as a reaction on your turn. Once you gain the Extra Attack feature, you can make a weapon attack yourself in addition to ordering your badger to attack.

This replaces Griffon Mount.

SANDHOG CLAWS

At 3rd level, you gain the ability to soften earth and stone, turning a 10-foot cubic area of solid rock into earth and clay, which your war-badger can dig through normally. You can do this a number of times per day equal

to your proficiency bonus. If used on an earth-based elemental creature, it requires a DC 8 (+ proficiency bonus) Wisdom save or the creature gains vulnerability to melee attacks for three rounds.

This replaces High in the Saddle.



SUBTERRANEAN COMBAT MASTERY

The abilities in the griffon knight's Aerial Combat Mastery trait should be read as applying to the war-badger's movement, which might involve digging or burrowing through the earth. They are otherwise unchanged.

This adjusts Aerial Combat Mastery.

IMPROVED SUBTERRANEAN COMBAT MASTERY

The ability in the griffon knight's Improved Aerial Combat Mastery trait called Sir Ector's Deadly Swoop should be replaced with the ability detailed below. The trait is otherwise unchanged.

SIR SIGFRIED'S DEADLY BREACH

While mounted on your badger, you can make a vicious attack. You may move up to double the war-badger's movement, but the last 15 feet of movement is underground, and you and your mount burst up through the ground in a square adjacent to the enemy. You and your mount make your attack rolls with advantage, and you add 1d10 to the damage for each attack that hits. The target makes a DC 12 Strength saving throw; failure indicates they are knocked prone.

This adjusts Improved Aerial Combat Mastery.

IRONCRAG WAR-BADGER

Created in recent years from the largest stock of badgers available and augmented with ritual magics from priests of Volund, the Ironcrag war-badger now breeds true, and is found across the region.

The weathered and battle-scarred mercenary glowered from the saddle, slowly drawing forth a length of thick, iron chain from a saddle-pouch. His snarling, snapping mount; a monstrous and equally scarred war-badger, is draped in battleworn scale-mail and harnessed for combat. The dwarf struggled to contain his steed as it growled and drew furrows in the earth, rabidly eager for the signal to charge.

IRONCRAG WAR-BADGER

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 48 (5d10 +20)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Perception +3, Survival (tracking) +3

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Feral Frenzy. While reduced to less than 50% of its hit point maximum, the war-badger's attacks do an additional 5 (1d4+3) damage.

Hard Charger. If the war-badger moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with an attack on the same turn, that target must successfully roll a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Keen Smell. The war-badger has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell and is able to detect creatures within 10 feet of it, even while burrowing.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 +3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 feet, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 +3) slashing damage.

Multiattack. The war-badger makes 2 Claw attacks.

Opportunist. If a prone target is within 5 feet of the war-badger, on its turn, the war-badger can use a bonus action to make one Bite attack against it.

OTHER MOUNTED OPTIONS

This archetype could also work with similar CR 2 or CR 3 creatures such as crypt spiders, dogmoles, eel hounds, ghost boars, ghoulish steeds, giant ants, lou carcohl, shadhavar, or terror birds (see *Tome of Beasts and Creature Codex*).





THE FREE COMPANIES: MERCENARY BACKGROUNDS IN THE SEPTIME STATES

by Brian Suskind

In Springmelt, the officers of the Free Companies gather to recruit brave soldiers, adventurers, and sellswords for the coming season of war. These mercenary bands might include as few as a dozen warriors or they might number in the scores or hundreds. Each courageous warrior who joins a free company does so for his or her own reasons, be it fame, fortune, or a yearning for the cold embrace of death, and each comes from a wide swath of society.

Famed Condottiere

(Background)

Among those who interact with the free companies, your name is known. This reputation, for good or ill, is built from every mile you've marched, every scar you've earned, and each drop of blood spilled on the battlefield, and you hold the title of condottiere or "battle leader." While not the captain of the free company, you have fought in the seasonal campaigns of the Seven Cities ever since you were old enough to hold a blade. Looking toward the future, a peaceful life seems dull compared to the opportunity to continue using your hard-earned skills.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Survival.

Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, plus one from among leatherworker's tools, smith's tools, or vehicle (land).

Languages: Any one of your choice.

Equipment: A backpack, an insignia of your rank, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp.

MERCENARY SPECIALIZATION

In part, you are known for a specific role during your time in a free company. Roll a d8 or choose from the options in the table below to determine your specialization.

d8	SPECIALTY
1	Logistics (wagoneers, cooks, smiths, and so on)
2	Light or Heavy Cavalry
3	Mage or Clerical Corps
4	Archery
5	Light or Heavy Infantry
6	Spies and Scouts
7	Engineering and Siege Engines
8	Officer

FEATURE:
PROFESSIONAL MERCENARY

You know the lifestyle of the Free Companies as only one who has lived it can. You can identify the various Septime mercenary groups

by their heraldry alone and can list the names of the commanders, captains, and previous employers. In any town or city, you have an unerring ability to find a tavern or alehouse catering to mercenaries and can usually find a place to sleep or a bite to eat there.



d8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 I am blunt and to the point. There is no time to play with pretty words.
- 2 I have nightmares of refighting old battles.
- 3 I love taking risks and rolling the dice on a risky plan if the profit is high enough.
- 4 Making quick decisions and going with your gut is how you survive in this mad world.
- 5 Being patient and careful is how you manage the risk and danger.
- 6 I brag about my accomplishments at every opportunity to better spread my legend.
- 7 Every morning, I recite the names of my companions who have died so I can live up to their memory.
- 8 I try to be professional in everything I do because I am a condottiere not some common sellsword.

d6 IDEAL

- 1 **Defense.** A swift victory assures no innocent lives will be lost in an extended conflict. (Good)
- 2 **Duty.** The oaths between myself and my companions are the most important law. (Lawful)
- 3 **Liberty.** We must fight those who cruelly oppress and enslave, so all might be free. (Chaotic)
- 4 **Valor.** Good? Evil? All that matters is testing my skills against all comers. (Neutral)
- 5 **Greed.** For the right amount of coin, I'll do anything. (Evil)
- 6 **Fame.** Building up my reputation is the only thing that matters to me. (Any)

d6 BOND

- 1 I will protect others from seeing the same horrors I experienced on the battlefield.
- 2 My honor guides me.
- 3 My first band of companions were betrayed and slain, I will not let that happen again.
- 4 As a professional soldier, it is my duty to protect non-combatants.
- 5 I am happy to raise my sword to stop those who would serve an evil cause.
- 6 The deeds at the heart of my fame were the work of another. I hope to achieve my own accomplishments before this secret is uncovered.

d6 BOND

- 1 It is only a matter of time before they catch up with me.
- 2 I am secretly very afraid, and it is only a matter of time until my nerve breaks.
- 3 Violence is always the answer.
- 4 I am often boastful and unintentionally loud.
- 5 There are no rules or morals in battle, on or off an actual battlefield.
- 6 I will betray anyone and any cause for another taste of fame and glory.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

The mercenary life and the fame you have earned are both a source of pride and guilt. Do you feel you earned your reputation? Or are you haunted by companions who fell along the way? This contradiction marks all who serve among the Free Companies.

VARIANT: CONDOTTIERE OUTCAST

Once your name lingered on the lips of every tavern song, now you are reviled, feared, and hated. You operate on the fringes of the criminal underworld with thieves, murderers, and pirates as your untrustworthy companions. Your unsavory reputation may stem from the events which began your fall from the heights of fame, or it may be due to your recent unsavory activities.

If you decide your departure from a free company led you down a path to the criminal underworld, you can choose the Infamous Renown feature (see sidebar) instead of the Professional Mercenary feature.

Free Company Scion

(Background)

You descend from a famous line of Septime free company veterans, and your first memory is playing among the tents, training yards, and war rooms of one campaign or

another. Adored or perhaps ignored by your parents, you spent your formative years learning weapons and armor skills from brave captains, camp discipline from burly sergeants, and a host of virtues and vices from the common foot soldiers. You've always been told you are special and destined to glory. The weight of your family's legacy, honor, or reputation can weigh heavily, inspiring you to great deeds, or it can be a factor you endeavor to leave behind.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, History.

Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, one musical instrument.

Languages: One of your choice.

Equipment: A backpack, a signet ring emblazoned with the symbol of your family's free company, a musical instrument of your choice, mess kit, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 20 gp.

FREE COMPANY REPUTATION

The mercenary group your family is associated with has a certain reputation that may or may not continue to impact your life. Roll a d8 or choose from the options in the table on the following page to determine the reputation of this free company.



VARIANT FEATURE: INFAMOUS RENOWN

If your character has the Famed Condottiere background, you may select this background feature instead of Professional Mercenary.

You find your reputation often evokes fear and trepidation, and you can leverage this to your benefit. In a town or city, you know the sort of

people in back alleys, dockside taverns, and seedy dens who have the latest rumors about who is doing what in the area. Additionally, you always know where to go to be inconspicuous if bounty hunters pick up your trail.

FEATURE: THE FAMILY NAME

Your family name is well known in the close-knit world of the Septime mercenaries. Members of free companies readily recognize your name and will provide food, drink, and shelter with pleasure or fear, depending upon your family's reputation. In the Seven

Cities, as war is a seasonal occupation, mercenaries walk the halls of power. You can also gain access to friendly military encampments, fortresses, or powerful political figures through your contacts among the mercenaries. Such connections might require the donation of money, magic items, or a great deal of drink.



d8 FREE COMPANY REPUTATION

- 1 Infamous. The company's evil deeds follow any who are known to consort with them.
 - 2 Honest. An upstanding company whose words and oaths are trusted.
 - 3 Unknown. No one knows this company. Its deeds have yet to be written.
 - 4 Feared. For good or ill, this company is generally feared on the battlefield.
 - 5 Mocked. Though it tries hard, the company is the butt of many jokes and derision.
 - 6 Specialized. This company is known for a specific type of skill on or off the battlefield.
 - 7 Disliked. For well-known reasons, this company has a bad reputation.
 - 8 Famous. The company's great feats and accomplishments are known far and wide.
-

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

The turmoil of war, the drudgery of the camp, long days on the road, and the thrill of battle shape a Free Company Scion to create strong

bonds of loyalty, military discipline, and a practical mind. Yet this history can scar as well, leaving the scion open to guilt, pride, resentment, and hatred.

d8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 I am ashamed of my family's reputation and seek to distance myself from their deeds.
 - 2 I have seen the world and know people everywhere.
 - 3 I expect the best life has to offer and won't settle for less.
 - 4 I know stories from a thousand campaigns and can apply them to any situation.
 - 5 After too many betrayals, I don't trust anyone.
 - 6 My parents were heroes, and I try to live up to their example.
 - 7 I have seen the horrors of war; nothing disturbs me anymore.
 - 8 I truly believe I have a destiny of glory and fame awaiting me.
-

d6 IDEAL

- 1 **Glory.** Only by fighting for the right causes can I achieve true fame and honor. (Good)
 - 2 **Dependable.** Once my oath is given, it cannot be broken. (Lawful)
 - 3 **Seeker.** Life can be short, so I will live it to the fullest before I die. (Chaotic)
 - 4 **Ruthless.** Only the strong survive. (Evil)
 - 5 **Mercenary.** If you have gold, I'm your blade. (Neutral)
 - 6 **Challenge.** Life is a test, and only by meeting life head on can I prove I am worthy. (Any)
-

d6 BOND

- 1 My parent's legacy is a tissue of lies. I will never stop until I uncover the truth.
- 2 I am the only one who can uphold the family name.
- 3 My companions are my life, and I would do anything to protect them.
- 4 I will never forget the betrayal leading to my parent's murder, but I will avenge them.
- 5 My honor and reputation are all that matters in life.
- 6 I betrayed my family to protect my friend who was a soldier in another free company.

d6 FLAW

- 1 I have no respect for those who never signed on to a free company or walked the battlefield.
- 2 I cannot bear losing anyone close to me, so I will keep everyone at a distance.
- 3 Bloody violence is the only way to solve problems.
- 4 I caused the downfall of my family's free company.
- 5 I am hiding a horrible secret about one of my family's patrons.
- 6 I see insults to my honor or reputation in every whisper, veiled glance, and knowing look.

Mercenary Recruit

(Background)

Every year, the hopeful gather in fields across the Seven Cities, striving to earn a place in one of the great mercenary bands. Some of these would-be heroes received training from a free company but needed more training before gaining membership. Others are full members but were selected to venture abroad to gain more experience before gaining an officer or condottiere rank. You are one of these hopeful warriors, just beginning to carve your place in the world with blade, spell, or skill.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Persuasion.

Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set.

Equipment: A letter of introduction from an old teacher, a gaming set of your choice, traveling clothes, and pouch containing 10 gp.

FEATURE: THEORETICAL EXPERIENCE

You have an encyclopedic knowledge of stories, myths, and legends of famous soldiers, mercenaries, and generals. Telling these stories can earn you a bed and food for the evening in taverns, inns, and alehouses. Your age or inexperience is endearing, making commoners more comfortable with sharing local rumors, news, and information with you.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Recruits are eager to earn their place in the world of the free companies. Sometimes humble, other times filled with false bravado, they are still untested by the joys and horrors awaiting them. Meaning well and driven to learn, recruits are generally plagued by their own fears, ignorance, and inexperience.

d8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 I am thrilled by the thought of an upcoming fight.
- 2 Why wait until I'm famous to have songs written about me? I can write my own right now!
- 3 I know many stories and legends of famous adventurers and compare everything to these tales.
- 4 Humor is how I deal with fear.
- 5 I always seek to learn new ways to use my weapons and love sharing my knowledge.
- 6 The only way I can prove myself is to work hard and take risks.
- 7 When you stop training, you sign your own death notice.
- 8 I try to act braver than I actually am.

d6 IDEAL

- 1 Respect. To be treated with honor and trust, I must honor and trust people first. (Good)
- 2 Discipline. A good soldier obeys orders. (Lawful)
- 3 Courage. Sometimes doing the right thing means breaking the law. (Chaotic)
- 4 Excitement. I live for the thrill of battle, the rush of the duel, and the glory of victory. (Neutral)
- 5 Power. When I achieve fame and power, no one will give me orders anymore! (Evil)
- 6 Ambition. I will make something of myself no matter what. (Any)

d6 BOND

- 1 My first mentor was murdered, and I seek the skills to avenge that crime.
- 2 I will become the greatest mercenary warrior ever.
- 3 I value the lessons from my teachers and trust them implicitly.
- 4 My family has sacrificed much to get me this far. I must repay their faith in me.
- 5 I will face any danger to win the respect of my companions.
- 6 I hide a map to an amazing and powerful magical treasure until I grow strong enough to follow it.

d6 FLAW

- 1 I do not trust easily and question anyone who attempts to give me orders.
- 2 I ridicule others to hide my insecurities.
- 3 To seem brave and competent, I refuse to allow anyone to doubt my courage.
- 4 I survived an attack by a monster as a child, and I have feared that creature ever since.
- 5 I have a hard time thinking before I act.
- 6 I hide my laziness by tricking others into doing my work for me.

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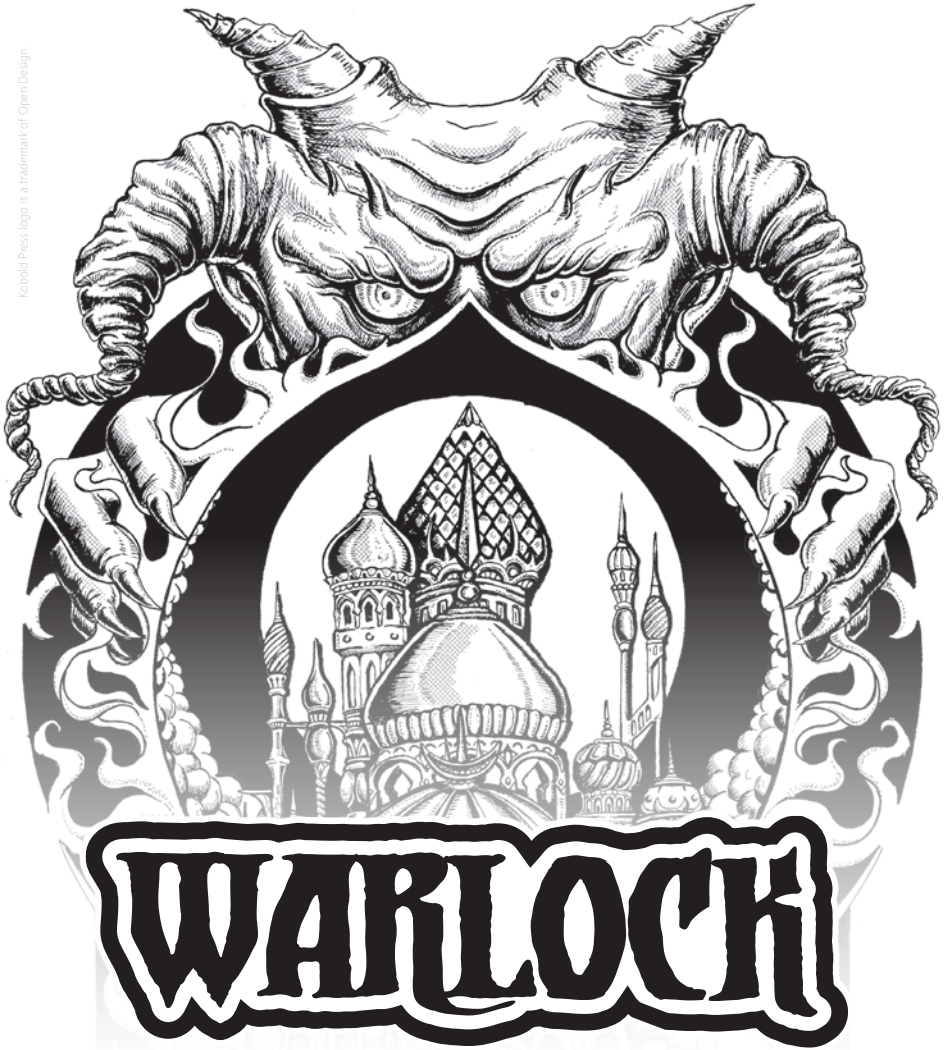
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