

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook

ATHENAEUM ARCANUM A SCORE OF MALEVOLENT SPECIAL ABILITIES



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INTRODUCTION

In the end, no matter how benevolent a weapon's special abilities seem, all are intended for a single purpose: aiding the weapon's owner in the destruction of his enemies. That said, there are certain special abilities which are much more vicious, more destructive, and yes, more outright evil than others. The dozen new special abilities introduced here definitely fall within that latter category. Not all of the abilities introduced here are evil, though some most definitely are, but all twelve of these new special abilities are uniformly vicious and palpably, viscerally destructive.

ROLEPLAYING NOTES

The new special abilities presented here are useful for any campaign, and will serve to add a grim, somewhat savage tone to combat. While very few of these new abilities are specifically designed for evil weapons and their wielders, all are especially well suited for villains and anti-heroes, and will give them a powerful edge in combat, as well as provide you with the means to put a little bit of fear into the player's, and their character's, hearts.

ARMOR AND SHIELD SPECIAL ABILITIES

CORRUPTED ICHØR

Corrupted ichor armor transforms the wearer's blood to pure, boiling acid when worn, punishing all those who would dare strike him with a rain of corrosive fluid. Each time the wearer is struck by a melee attack that inflicts piercing or slashing damage, an eruption of acid sprays out from the wound. The being who wounded the *corrupted ichor* armor's wearer is automatically struck, suffering acid damage equal to _ the amount of damage his attack inflicted; with a successful Reflex save against DC 13, the damage is reduced to _. The acid spray has a maximum range of 10 ft., meaning attackers outside that range suffer no damage. The magic of the *corrupted ichor*

spray is such that it avoids cover entirely, so only those outside its range are safe from danger. Creatures that are immune to acid are likewise immune to the effects of *corrupted ichor*.

Moderate transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *acid arrow*; Price +3 bonus.

IRON MAIDEN

Armor augmented with this exceptionally dangerous special ability is painful to its wielder and lethal to his enemies. On command, as a free action, the armor can be commanded to erupt forth with thick, iron spikes. The spikes, which are needle sharp and long as a dagger, pierce both the inside

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and outside of the armor; the wearer suffers 1d4 points of damage from the spikes, while any being in direct contact with him – such as those attempting to grapple him, or those constricting him – suffer 2d4 + the armor's enhancement bonus points of damage. The spikes extend and retract in the blink of an eye, and may be used once each round.

Faint transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *greater magic weapon*; Price +2 bonus.

⊕⊕ZE SHEATH

When an owner of *ooze sheath* armor dons his suit, his body undergoes a horrific transformation, becoming a writhing, clumping mass of gelatinous ooze. While so transformed, he gains damage reduction 2/- against bludgeoning attacks and a bonus equal to the armor's enhancement bonus to Escape Artist checks to break free of a grapple. In addition, for a total of 10 rounds each day, he can take on a purely gelatinous form, allowing him to ooze through even the tiniest cracks as though by the *gaseous form* spell. While so transformed, the bonus to Escape Artist skill checks granted by *ooze sheath* is doubled. The wearer can transform his body as a free action, and need not use the ooze form on consecutive rounds.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *polymorph, gaseous form*; Price +4 bonus.

SPIDER ARMS

Armor with this powerful special ability can be commanded to extend the wearer's limbs, twisting and sculpting them into spindly arms grotesquely reminiscent of a spider's. While extended, the wielder is considered to have reach, and can make

melee attacks to a range of 10 feet as easily as he attacks adjacent squares. *Spider arm's* armor can extend the wearer's arms for a total of 10 rounds each day – these rounds need not be consecutive, and the armor can be activated and deactivated as a free action.

Moderate transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *polymorph*; Price +2 bonus.

STRANGLER

Armor with this special ability is especially dangerous in close combat, for it grants its wearer great prowess in the art of grappling. When engaged in a grapple, the wearer gains a bonus to all grapple checks equal to the armor's enhancement bonus, and can inflict lethal unarmed damage during a grapple without the normal –4 penalty. In addition, when dealing unarmed damage, the wearer gains a bonus to damage equal to the armor's enhancement bonus. This bonus applies only to unarmed attacks dealing lethal damage, as the armor hungers for the pleasure of the kill.

Faint transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bull's strength*; Price +1 bonus.

V⊕ID

A shield augmented by this special ability appears as an infinite black void, shot through with motes of greasy light, like stars seen through a greasy lens. Those who dare approach the shield can hear a faint howling issuing forth, like the cry of a distant, terrified child, or perhaps the whisper of arctic air skimming glacial mountains.

When the shield is grasped firmly, it becomes a portal to a distant plane. When an attack directed at the wielder misses by a number equal to, or less than the shield's

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enhancement bonus, the void yawns open and sucks the weapon used in the attack into its endless depths. Non-magical weapons are absorbed with no chance of a saving throw, while magic weapons gain a save against a DC equal to 12 + the shield's enhancement bonus; the weapon gains a +1 bonus to the save for every point of magical enhancement it possesses. Magic weapons that fail to save are sucked into the void and lost, while those that successfully save fall to the ground, if they are ranged weapons, or remain in their wielder's hand if they are not. Items equal in power to an artifact cannot be lost to a *void* shield.

The power of a *void* shield is such that it can also damage those who strike it while making unarmed attacks, or when using natural weapons. When such an attack misses as described above, the attacker takes 1d6 + the shield's enhancement bonus in cold damage. Creatures that are immune to cold or negative energy do not suffer damage when striking a *void* shield.

Strong conjuration; CL 16th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *teleport object*; Price +5 bonus.

WEAPON SPECIAL ABILITIES

BLOØD BERSERKER

A weapon with this deadly special ability thirsts for the taste of blood, and is driven into frenzy when immersed in its crimson flow. When a *blood berserker* weapon inflicts a successful critical hit, it attunes itself to the victim's body, increasing its critical multiplier by one step in the following round, from x2 to x3 for example, but only if the weapon is used against the same target. If another critical hit is inflicted against the attuned being during the following round, the critical multiplier increases by another step; increases to the critical multiplier are cumulative, but all increases disappearing if the weapon does not inflict a critical hit on the specified target creature in the subsequent round. Critical multiplier increases also disappear when the targeted creature is slain, or otherwise leaves the combat. Once a *blood berserker* weapon becomes attuned to a specific target, it

remains attuned until the victim is slain, or until it flees the combat—the weapon is considered attuned even if its critical multiplier is not currently increased.

Once a *blood berserker* has tasted a victim's blood, it is loathe to attack other targets until the attuned victim is slain, and resentful of its wielder if forced to do so. While attuned to a specific target, the weapon's critical multiplier is reduced to x1 when used to attack another being.

Creatures that are immune to critical hits, or those which do not bleed, such as constructs, oozes and plants, cannot be the subject of a *blood berserker's* attunement, and may be attacked while the weapon is attuned to another target without penalty.

Only weapons that inflict slashing or piercing damage can be augmented with this special ability.

Moderate transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *rage*; Price +1 bonus.

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BONE BREAKER

Bone breaker weapons strike with the force of a thunderbolt, splintering and snapping bone with the ease of a child snapping a twig. On a successful critical hit, a weapon with this special ability forces the victim to succeed at a Fortitude save against DC 15; if the save succeeds, damage is inflicted as normal, but if the save is failed, bones shatter and the victim suffers penalties as though disabled. He retains his hit points, minus those inflicted by the critical hit, but is restricted to either a move action or standard action each round, and suffers 1 point of damage each time he performs a standard action. The victim remains effectively disabled until, through natural or magical healing, he regains hit points equal to the damage inflicted by the critical hit.

Once a victim's bones have been shattered by this weapon special ability, he need not attempt further saves against subsequent critical hits, unless he is healed. However, if reduced to 0 hit points or less while his bones are shattered, he is automatically slain.

Creatures without bones, such as creatures of the plant type or ooze type, or certain other monsters, are immune to the effects of this special ability. When used against constructs, skeletons, or other, similar undead, roll to confirm critical hits as normal; on a successful hit, the being must attempt a Fortitude save as above, or be destroyed instantly. Note that the roll to confirm the critical is made only to see whether the being must save versus destruction, and that the *bone breaker* ability does not confer the ability to inflict critical hits on beings that are normally immune to them.

Only weapons that inflict bludgeoning damage can be augmented with the *bone breaker* special ability.

Strong necromancy; CL 14th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *harm*; Price +3 bonus.

CORPSE EATER

A weapon with this sinister special ability has a ferocious appetite for dead flesh, and when allowed to gorge itself, it floods its wielder's spirit with power. If the wielder plunges the *corpse eater* into the flesh of a dead being for one full round, the weapon absorbs the corpse's lingering soul energy and redirects it, granting the wielder 1d8 hit points, as by the *death knell* spell. If the dead being was directly slain by the *corpse eater* weapon, then the wielder also gains a +2 temporary bonus to his strength, as by the *death knell* spell, and the weapon's hardness is temporarily increased by 2 points as well. Bonuses to strength and weapon hardness are not cumulative, and the wielder cannot use the *corpse eater* to gain additional temporary hit points until the originals have faded, or have been otherwise lost. A *corpse eater* can only feed on a single body once, and it cannot be used to draw soul energy from undead, or from non-living creatures, such as constructs.

Only melee weapons can be augmented with the *corpse eater* special ability.

Faint necromancy; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death knell*; Price +1 bonus.

DEATH DEALER

Weapons with this deadly special ability are much favored by assassins, for they inflict immense harm on the unwary. A *death dealer* weapon can be used to perform a coup de grace against a helpless

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opponent as a standard action. Against foes with total concealment, the wielder must dedicate a full round action to finding the victim, then may deliver the coup de grace as a standard action.

Faint divination; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true strike*; Price +1 bonus.

FANG SHOT

A ranged weapon with this special ability fires arrows, bolts or bullets that transform into gnashing jaws when they impact against a living target, ripping and tearing at flesh until sated, or until removed. During the two rounds immediately following a successful attack, *fang shot* automatically inflicts additional piercing damage equivalent to the base damage of the weapon + its enhancement bonus (bonuses from Strength, or from other weapon special abilities do not apply). At the end of the second round, the ammunition falls to the earth, gorged to fullness. A victim can use a move action to remove a *fang shot* on his turn.

Fang shot does not affect constructs, or other creatures, such as many elementals, which are not composed of flesh or another organic matter.

Moderate conjuration; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *greater magic fang*; Price +2 bonus.

HEALING VOID

A weapon with this dangerous special ability inflicts wounds that resist the healing touch of magic. Wounds inflicted by a weapon with this special ability cannot be healed by magic of any kind, whether arcane or divine. Attempts to use spells, spell-like abilities, supernatural abilities or magical items to heal such wounds auto-

matically fail, though they still consume spell slots, uses per day, or charges as normal. Only time and natural healing will allow full recovery.

Creatures which do not heal naturally, such as constructs or undead, cannot recover from damage inflicted by a *healing void* weapon by any means – even spells such as *lightning bolt*, which normally heal a flesh golem, cannot repair damage inflicted by a *healing void* weapon.

Strong abjuration; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *anti-magic field*; Price +3 bonus.

HEART WORM

A bow, crossbow or firearm enhanced with this special ability is lethal in the extreme, for it has the power to transform ammunition into a magical, flesh eating maggot, grub or insect that seeks out and devours the heart's tender meat. On a roll of a natural 20 (followed by a successful roll to confirm a critical hit), the arrow, bolt or bullet strikes, transforms and instantly burrows into the victim's heart, killing him instantly. Constructs, oozes, plant creatures and other monsters without hearts are not affected by the *heart worm*, nor are undead. As with a *vorpal* weapon, the Game Master may have to make judgment calls as to the exact effect.

Only piercing weapons can be enchanted with this special ability. Bows, crossbows or firearms that possess this special ability transfer it to their ammunition upon firing.

Strong conjuration; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true strike*, *summon swarm*; Price +5 bonus.

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MALEVOLENCE

Weapons augmented with this special ability are powered by the energies of purest evil, making them anathema to all good beings. When used to attack a being of good alignment, a *malevolence* weapon's critical multiplier is increased by one step, from x2 to x3 for example. Conversely, when used to attack a being of evil alignment, its critical multiplier is lowered by one step, from x3 to x2 for example.

Those of good alignment cannot wield *malevolent* weapons. Should they attempt to do so, then all enhancement bonuses to attack and damage, as well as all special abilities the weapon possesses, are rendered inert. Inert bonuses and abilities return the instant an evil being grasps the weapon.

Faint divination; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *detect good, detect evil*; Price +1 bonus.

RENDING

Rending weapons tear into living flesh with a fury that is awesome and frightening to behold. If a weapon with this special ability successfully strikes a single opponent twice in a single round, then the two wounds split wide open, tearing across the victim's body until they merge into one hideous injury. The victim suffers an additional 2d4 + the weapon's enhancement bonus damage when this occurs. A weapon with this special ability can only *rend* an individual opponent's flesh once each round, but can *rend* more than one opponent each round.

Constructs and oozes are immune to the effects of this special ability. Only slashing weapons can possess this special ability.

Moderate necromancy; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *inflict serious wounds*; Price +2 bonus.

SAWTOOTH

The killing end of a *sawtooth* weapon vibrates when held, transforming it into a buzz saw capable of tearing through flesh with ease. A *sawtooth* weapon ignores armor and natural armor bonuses, cutting through them like butter, though Dexterity, deflection, dodge and other such bonuses still apply. This property can only be applied to melee weapons, thrown weapons, and ammunition.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge, pass-wall*; Price +5 bonus.

SOUL DEVOURER

A *soul devouring* weapon is much feared, and with good reason, for it slays not only the body, but also the immortal spirit. When a *soul-devouring* weapon slays a victim, the being must attempt a Will save against DC 17. If the save is successful, the victim is still killed, but suffers no other effect. If the save is failed, however, the victim's soul is dispersed by the weapon's evil, magical powers; those whose souls have been dispersed cannot be *raised, resurrected*, or otherwise returned to life by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell, or through direct divine intervention.

Intelligent weapons of good alignment, or weapons with the *holy* special ability, cannot possess this special ability.

Strong necromancy; CL 16th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *trap the soul*; Price +4 bonus.

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VENGEANCE SWORN

A *vengeance sworn* weapon is zealous in its desire to protect its wielder, and ruthless in its hunt for vengeance against those who harm him. Whenever the wielder is struck in combat, a *vengeance-sworn* weapon's enhancement bonus increases by +2, from +1 to +3 for example, and its critical multiplier increases one step, from x2 to x3 for example. This increase lasts for one round, and applies only to attacks made against the being who struck its wielder.

If the wielder is damaged by attacks from multiple sources in a single round, then the bonuses apply to all who harmed him, though they still only last for a single round.

Moderate divination and transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true strike*, *bull's strength*; Price +2bonus.

WINTER'S BITE

A weapon with this special ability is infused with the raging heart of the far northern tundra, its blamed perpetually rimed in frost and radiating frigid cold in waves. On a roll of a natural 20 (followed by a successful roll to confirm a critical hit), the weapon flash freezes the victim, turning their flesh and blood to ice. Creatures which are immune to the effects of cold cannot be frozen, while creatures such as constructs and undead can be temporarily covered in frost, but suffer no ill effects. Most other beings, however, die instantly from massive shock.

Strong evocation; CL 17th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ice storm*; Price +5 bonus.

WOUND TEARING

Weapons with this special ability are particularly vicious, ripping and tearing at existing wounds with each blow. Each time a *wound tearing* sword strikes a victim who is already injured, whether by the enchanted weapon, or by another attack, the victim suffers 2 additional points of damage per each existing wound.

Creatures which are immune to the affects of bleeding are likewise immune to the effects of this special ability.

Moderate necromancy; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *inflict serious wounds*; Price +2 bonus.

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