

The Undying



Not dead, not alive, but forever changed

DL Loftis



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The Undying

The violent raging and swirling storms in the vast region known as the Hellmaw are the result of the mysterious object that crashed into Calador two millennia ago. The entire region is wracked by temporal storms, planar rifts, and erratic weather patterns that make travel in the region one of the most dangerous things an adventurer can do. Those who lived in the area when the cataclysm happened were either killed instantly or... changed.

Ecology of Undeath

There are innumerable ways for one to die in Calador, and those who have had the misfortune of dying within the Hellmaw found themselves forever changed. Their souls cling to the decayed shell of their body; no longer living but not dead.

Unlike most undead creatures, the undying have retained their sense of self awareness, and are not beholden to any master save themselves.

Trapped between life and death unable to feel joy, sorrow, pain, or pleasure; the undying find themselves prone to bouts of madness as a result of the isolation and strain of their condition. Often times, through this madness, the undying experiences the echoes of emotion from their living days.

The undying may appear as any type of humanoid corpse, from a shuffling and withered

husk to a gleaming white skeleton. Indeed, no two undying look exactly alike.

Some undying seem to pay no heed to their appearance, even relishing the repulsion and horror that manifests in others, while some go out of their way to avoid looking any more horrifying than necessary.

Cold Reception

The Undying are very rare outside of the Hellmaw, but occasionally one is seen wandering the world for reasons only it can know.

Almost without fail the undying are shunned, if not outright attacked, by the living who do not separate the undying from the undead. Occasionally an undying adventurer will win the trust of the living they encounter, but it is a long hard road.

Undying adventurers that arrive undisguised amongst normal folk can expect to be denied entrance to most civilized places, unless they can somehow convince others that they mean no harm. It is most likely that they will be chased off without even getting a chance to explain their appearance and their companions will likely receive a chilly reception, assuming they are not chased off as well.

Only places close to the Hellmaw, or those with exceptional knowledge of it, would admit an undying into their midst without a second thought.



Suffice it to say that the undying make it a point to avoid populated areas and attempt to disguise their true identities, lest they be the target of every cleric, paladin, or enthusiastic hero for miles.

Undying Traits

Regardless of the undying's former race, all share the following traits:

Ability Scores: Constitution increases by 2

Age: To the undying, age means nothing, but most undying more than a few hundred years old become so wracked with madness, few are seen beyond this age. Those that survive this long usually end up being killed, mistaken for mindless and dangerous undead. Undying that manage to hang on to their sanity and survive their encounters with the breathing still suffer from memory loss and often have trouble with their identities. Only the more recent undying actually remember what their lives were like in the past, and exactly how they died.

Alignment: Most undying tend towards neutrality; however they rarely remain purely neutral for long. Madness, persecution, loneliness, or simply the strain of one's consciousness holding onto the physical realm can bend and shape an undying's ethics.

Size: Upon creation, undying may choose to be small or medium, according to what they were before death.

Small undying move 5 ft slower than others, and they suffer disadvantage when attacking with heavy weapons. However, they can move through the space of any medium or larger size creature.

Undying are thin and gaunt or, in many cases, merely skeletons. As a guideline, the skeleton makes up about 15% of the weight of a human.

Speed: Undying have a speed of 25', except for small undying that move 20'.

Darkvision: The undying have darkvision to a distance of 60'

Languages: The undying speak common and one other language, usually the language they spoke in life.

Undead Body: Your type is undead, and you do not benefit from any spell or effect that does not work on undead, including cure spells. You cannot benefit from the medicine skill or a healer's kit.

You no longer need to eat, sleep, or breathe; however you still require rest like other races to regain spent HD and remove levels of fatigue. You enter an inactive state for 4 hours, during which time you do not sleep and you are fully aware of your surroundings.

You are immune to disease and poison (both the damage and the condition.)

Unsound Mind: All undying suffer from madness induced by the stress and isolation of Undeath combined with the sense of self clinging to the rotting shell of their body. The undying's madness is usually suppressed by the spark of life, but stress and injury can cause it to manifest suddenly. When it does, roll on the Undying Madness table.

Spark of Life: The undying possess a spark of life that separates them from the undead. This spark, faint though it is, is enough that normal undead hate them every bit as much as they hate the living.

The spark of life keeps madness at bay, but an undying may choose to forgo this protection and use the spark of life as a bonus action to remove a level of fatigue, or spend one of its HD to recover hit points.

Once the spark is spent in this fashion, the madness takes hold, and the undying cannot use the spark of life again until it has completed a long rest.

The spark of life renders the undying immune to the turn and destroy undead abilities of divine casters, even if it has been spent as described above.

Undead Fortitude

Undying feel no pain and do not bleed. If damage reduces the undying to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a successful save, it is reduced to 1hp.

Undying Speech

A lack of vocal chords and air in the lungs makes it difficult for undying to speak. Typical undead are unable to speak at all, but an undying can sometimes summon up enough life energy to rattle its long silent voice into action, even if it is just an unearthly whisper.

The undying speak in a raspy whisper, the effort keeping their utterances brief, making it difficult for those more than a few feet away to hear them clearly.

Spellcasting is difficult for the undying due to the effort involved in saying more than a few words at a time.

In order to cast a spell with a verbal component, the undying must make a successful Intelligence (arcana) skill check with a DC equal to 8 + the spell level. Failure results in the spell failing, and being wasted.

Undying Backgrounds

When choosing a background for an undying, consider subtle changes to reflect the nature of the character. Obviously the undying would have had this background while alive, in most cases, rendering contacts and certain benefits useless unless they have somehow come to accept the undying as an ally. This could create an interesting story on its own.

Some undying may have been around so long that the background choice may reflect some activity or existence they had after joining the undead.

Work with your GM to flesh out the changes to better fit the concept you have for your undying hero.



Undying Racial Feats

Bones of stone: Your bones are blackened, petrified, or somehow magically hardened.

Your AC is 13 + your dexterity modifier as long as you aren't wearing any armor.

Eternal Sight: Your eyes glow with a faint, unearthly light. You can see normally in Darkness, both magical and nonmagical, to a distance of 120 feet.

Fade: Spend the spark of life to become quasi-incorporeal, your physical form nearly fading into nothing, along with any non living things you are wearing or holding.

While you are in this form, you are resistant to all non magical damage for a number of rounds equal to your level plus your Constitution bonus.

Creatures suffer disadvantage to Wisdom (perception) rolls against you.

Frightening Appearance: You gain +1 to your charisma to a maximum of 20.

You have learned to use your appearance to great effect, and gain proficiency in the intimidation skill. If you already possess the intimidation skill, you gain expertise in it instead.

Necrotic Affinity: You gain +1 to your constitution, to a maximum of 20.

You are resistant to necrotic damage, and when you spend the spark of life to recover HP, you may spend an extra HD, if available.

Relic: You are very old; having witnessed many centuries of history, travelled across many lands, and learned a thing or two.

You gain +1 to your Intelligence, to a maximum of 20, and you gain proficiency in the skill of your choice. If this skill is one you already possess, you gain expertise in that skill. In addition, you learn two additional languages, and one tool proficiency.

Stench of the Grave: The smell of death clings to you, even if you are nothing but a dry skeleton.

You may expend your spark of life to intensify this effect, gaining the *stench* ability until you take a long rest and recover your spark of life.

Any creature that starts its turn within 15' of you must make a constitution saving throw, DC 10+ con bonus, or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. Any creature that succeeds on this saving throw is immune to your stench for 1 hour.

Sharp claws: You gain a +1 bonus to your strength score, to a maximum of 20.

Your fingers end in sharp bone claws. The claws are natural weapons, which you can use to make unarmed strikes. You deal slashing damage equal to 1d4 + your Strength modifier.

You may spend the spark of life to have your claw attacks count as magical weapons for the purposes of damaging creatures immune to non magical damage.

Touch of Corruption: Everything you touch, everywhere you walk, living things wilt. You are capable of striking a living target and siphoning their life force to heal your own wounds.

By expending your spark of life, you may cast *Vampiric Touch* as a 3rd level spell, without expending a spell slot or material components, or having to roll undying speech. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

Undying Vigor: You gain +1 to your Constitution score to a maximum of 20.

Your movement rate increases by 5 ft and you may spend your spark of life to automatically succeed on a death save.

Undying Will: You gain a +1 to your wisdom, to a maximum of 20. Your cold lack of emotion grants you advantage to saving throws against mind affecting spells or effects.

Undying Madness

D20 Affliction	
1	You become paranoid and cannot benefit from the help action and must remain at least 5 ft away from all other creatures. No other creature is considered allied for mechanical purposes.
2	The madness drives you to make irrational choices. Whenever you attempt an action, roll a d6. On a 4+, you perform the action, on 1-3; you do the exact opposite. (GM's adjudication)
3	You become petty and selfish, and cannot use the help action nor do anything that would solely benefit others. You will not willingly give anything to another, and may covet other's possessions.
4	Your undead condition leaves you feeling hopeless. On each turn, roll a d4. On a 1, you can only move or take the disengage action. You have disadvantage on saving throws against fear.
5	You become verbally abusive. Whenever an ally rolls a d20, they must roll a d4 and subtract the result so long as they can hear you criticizing and berating their every action.
6	You are repulsed and ashamed by your undead form. If any living creature comes within 10 ft, you must attempt to move away. You remain out of sight of your allies, unless you are completely obscured. If forced, you suffer disadvantage on all attack, skill checks, and saves.
7	The madness causes irrational fear. You are frightened by all foes while suffering this affliction. This effect occurs even if you are somehow immune to the frightened condition.
8	Hallucinations wrack your mind. When you attack, roll a Wisdom Saving Throw, DC 15, as you attempt to determine what is real. Failure results in the waste of the remainder of your turn.
9	You are tormented by spirits of the dead all around you. Whenever you make a skill check, attack, or saving throw, roll a d4 and subtract the result.
10	The madness has severely distorted your perception of reality. You have disadvantage on all Perception rolls, and your passive perception is reduced by 2.
11	Your memory has been affected and you can't recall information as easily. You have disadvantage on all Intelligence checks.
12	The madness has caused you to lose your edge. Your proficiency bonus becomes +0.
13	You mutter constantly and develop a tick. You suffer disadvantage on all Dexterity rolls.
14	Your alignment reverses along the good/evil axis. If you are neutral, randomize.
15	You become confused, suffering disadvantage on all Wisdom checks and can no longer read.
16	Any time you suffer damage, you must make a Wisdom saving throw with a DC equal to the damage or be stunned until the end of your next turn as you relive your death in flashbacks.
17	You are overwhelmed with apathy. You may not use reactions, or take the dash action.
18	You become a completely different person with a different personality, race and class chosen at random. You cannot use your own class abilities; instead you attempt to use the (nonexistent) abilities of your imagined class. You refuse to acknowledge that you are dead.
19	A friend only you can see tells you how to think, feel, and act. The GM can determine your actions according to his whim.
20	You revel in your madness. You must attack or be attacked every round that you are in combat. After the battle, roll a new affliction that manifests until your next combat encounter.

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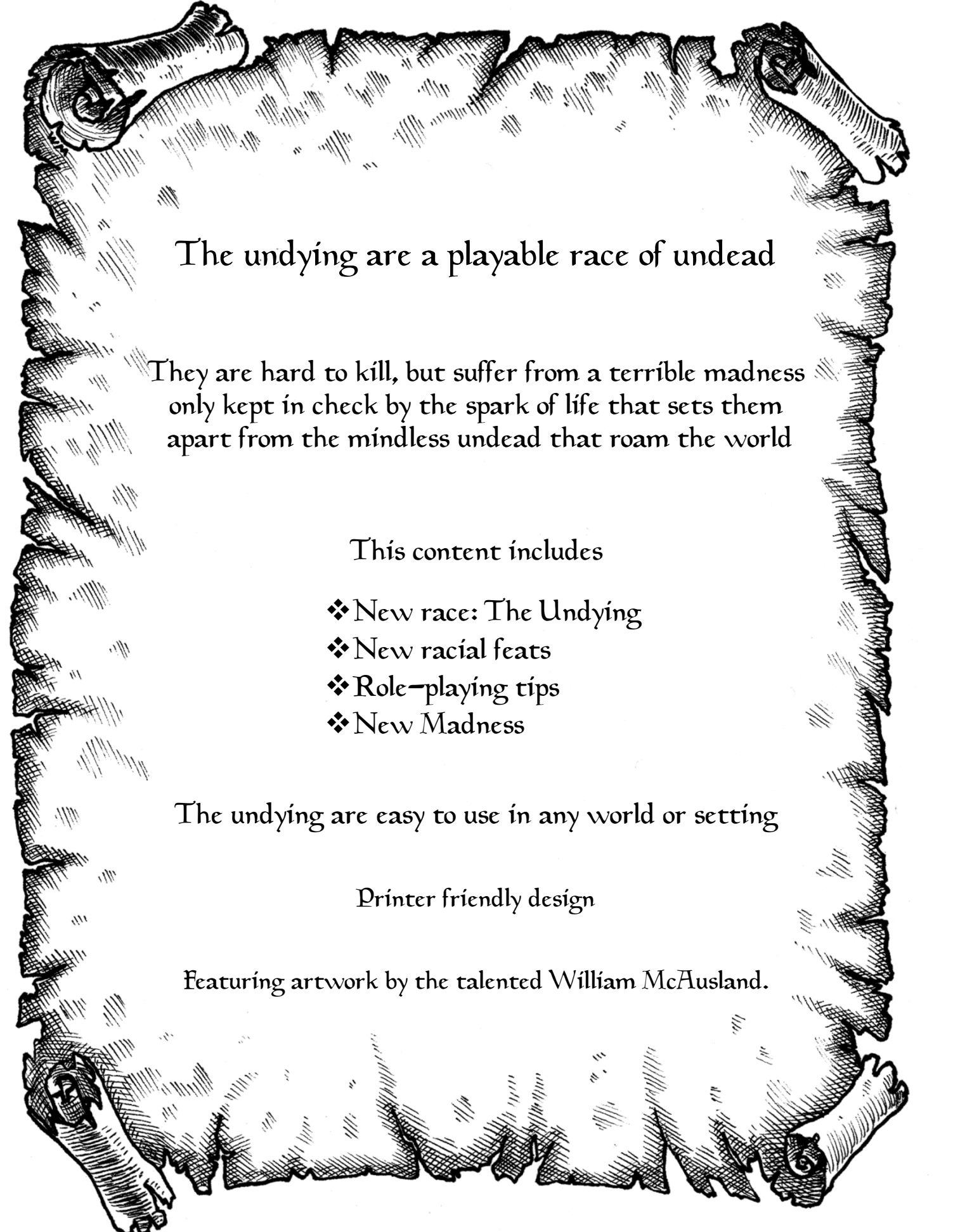
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The undying are a playable race of undead

They are hard to kill, but suffer from a terrible madness only kept in check by the spark of life that sets them apart from the mindless undead that roam the world

This content includes

- ❖ New race: The Undying
- ❖ New racial feats
- ❖ Role-playing tips
- ❖ New Madness

The undying are easy to use in any world or setting

Printer friendly design

Featuring artwork by the talented William McAusland.