

VILLAIN SPOTLIGHT

EZEKIAL

MEEET EZEKIAL—A MINOTAUR of uncanny intelligence and surprising sophistication. Betrayed and spurned in his past, he now leads a crew of thieves stealing priceless artifacts and rare tomes, bearing out his grudge against civilization while accumulating knowledge and power.



WRITING AMBROSE INGRAM
COLOR ART ELLIS GOODSON
EDITING MIKE MYLER
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

BACKGROUND

Ezekial grew up enslaved to a nobleman who used him as a guard and torturer. With an obviously abnormal intelligence, his master Lord Harev sought to nurture a powerful asset by encouraging Ezekial's intellectual development. Tutors taught him to read and write, and enough etiquette to navigate high society (albeit not with abundant grace).

The minotaur mistook his master's opportunism for generosity and asked to be freed, hoping to pursue placement at an academy or cloister—Lord Harev refused and enraged, Ezekial killed and devoured his former master. After covering up the nobleman's death Ezekial managed his master's accounts in secret, liquidating a large portion of the estate before the murder was discovered.

Ezekial began searching for an academy that would take him but was repeatedly rejected because of his monstrous appearance. Eventually in desperation he broke into a library and stole a large collection of tomes, learning only later that one of the books was the sole copy of that text—by taking that book he had stolen knowledge from those who once tried to keep it from him. With that realization Ezekial found his purpose and his robbery sprees began.

DESCRIPTION & PERSONALITY

Ezekial is a brown-haired minotaur who typically wears a dressing robe of fine, bright fabric. He has lived comfortably since gaining his freedom and his gut is large (which is all too apparent when he wears his robes open). The minotaur bathes regularly; his

hair has a silky sheen and he uses a perfume with a sweet, floral scent. Ezekial has adorned his horns with passages from his favorite books—dwarvish runes run in a spiral all the way from the base of his skull to their tips and from a distance, they appear to have a distinctive texture which can only be identified as writing once within 10 feet.

Although scholarly Ezekial has never been interested in arcana. Instead he has sought insight to how the world works through the study of history and philosophy. When forbidden from studying the minotaur turned to theft to claim the knowledge he craves. He often sells off artwork or magic items to finance further exploits, keeping the rarest maps and books for himself. His successes have attracted a small band of fellow thieves, allowing Ezekial to mastermind ever more complex heists.

Ezekial is usually talking. He reads aloud, talks to himself when alone, and fills any pause in conversation with a story or fable. In part the minotaur enjoys hearing his own deep voice but he has also found that most people are distracted by its commanding tones. He often pontificates loudly, appearing quite distracted while carefully, secretly evaluating a location or situation and giving coded commands to his team.

Ezekial is usually patient and thoughtful but he acutely experiences a burning savagery inside himself. In addition, he carries resentment towards those who have excluded and exploited him in the past. Occasionally his feelings of resentment manifest and he loses poise, indulging his monstrous side.

EZEKIAL'S TRAITS

- **Ideal.** "I have a surplus of strength and cunning and I am willing to apply both to further my pursuit of knowledge."
- **Flaw.** "There is a chained beast in my gut. I cannot always keep it contained."
- **Bond.** "There are many who have excluded me, robbing me of knowledge...I will take what they tried to keep from me and I will see them suffer..."

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EZEKIAL'S CREW

Ezekial's band is made up of about twenty infiltrators, of whom most are aspiring thieves that care more about the prestige of the heist than the value of the score (N male and female human or elven **spies**). These infiltrators value the care Ezekial puts into his plans and appreciates that when things go sour, the minotaur often becomes the focus of attention.

ORLII MEADOWLARK

Ezekial's second-in-command is an expert thief named Orlii. Orlii first heard of the enlightened minotaur after he broke into the vault of a temple, leaving piles of wealth but taking centuries old texts. Orlii tracked down Ezekial and was surprised (but not put off) when she found him, encouraging him to recruit others and increase the reach and profitability of his heists. Orlii is a LE female elven **spy** with the following changes:

- Orlii has 54 (12d8) hit points and AC 14 (shield).
- Orlii attacks with a rapier:
Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage.
- Orlii is an exceptional infiltrator; add Deception +7 and Investigation +7 to her skills.
- Orlii has a *hat of disguise*.

ELVERN TAVERNGRIP

The young halfling cleric is a recent, eager addition to the enlightened minotaur's crew. Elvern was tasked by his roguish deity to accompany, aid, and learn from Ezekial. Elvern cares little for what is stolen or how it's stolen, but cares a great deal about the gold that comes afterwards. Orlii doesn't care much for him but Ezekial has put Elvern's divine magic to good use. Elvern is a CN male halfling **priest** with the following changes:

- Elvern has a Dexterity score of 16 (+3).
- Elvern has AC 14 (leather armor).
- Elvern attacks with a short sword:
Short Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

- Elvern's skills are: Deception +4, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5
- Elvern's Divine Eminence feature deals poison damage.
- Elvern has the following cleric spells prepared:
Cantrips: *guidance, light, mending*
1st level (4 slots): *charm person, cure wounds, disguise self, sanctuary*
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, pass without trace*
3rd level (2 slots): *bestow curse, dispel magic*

BASIL BRICKRUNNER

Basil is one of Ezekial's favorite fences (N male dwarf **noble**). Technically not a part of the crew, the stout folk is a caravan master happy to travel with a minotaur—taking advantage of the protection Ezekial provides while selling stolen goods along the way. Although their partnership is based on mutual benefits and commerce, Basil and Ezekial have become good friends over the years. The minotaur uses the dwarf as a source of information, a means of entering cities, and as a far-ranging fence who can get his wares out of a city swiftly and quietly.

EZEKIAL'S MODUS OPERANDI

While investigating a potential target Ezekial takes over the home of a noble or wealthy merchant—sometimes by murdering the occupant, sometimes by squatting, and occasionally by purchasing the property. Once he finds a comfortable base he corresponds via letters with the city's elite to get a sense for potential allies or patsies. The enlightened minotaur mostly keeps to his lush hideout but occasionally wanders through the city at night. He doesn't mind being cooped up but finds winding city streets to be relaxing. Often when Ezekial is setting up a heist, rumors begin to circulate of a monstrous beast roaming the settlement at night.

When the enlightened minotaur begins an operation he sets up his infiltrators in useful positions around town. Ezekial tries to get his gang integrated into the guard, militia, or local bureaucracy,

and those that can't in league with hawkers, traders, or merchants instead. If he can arrange to set up a local noble or scholar to take the blame for the crime, Ezekial goes out of his way to do so. The enlightened minotaur is patient and knows what he is trying to steal long before he begins an operation.

Ezekial, Enlightened Minotaur
Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 102 (12d10+36)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Athletics +8, History +8, Insight +6, Perception +6, Religion +8
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Draconic, Thieves' Cant
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

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

Chatty. Creatures within 60 feet of Ezekial who can hear him cannot take reactions and have disadvantage on concentration saving throws unless Ezekial used Reckless on his last turn.

Labyrinthine Recall. Ezekial can perfectly recall any path he has traveled.

Reckless. At the start of his turn, Ezekial can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls he makes during that turn, but attack rolls against him have advantage until the start of his next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ezekial makes two fist attacks and one gore attack. If both fist attacks hit a Large or smaller target, the target is grappled or knocked prone.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4+4) bludgeoning damage.

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



REACTIONS

Cunning Redirection. When Ezekial is hit by an attack, he can increase his AC by 4 and push the attacker 5 feet. If this causes the attack to miss, the attacker must succeed a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. Ezekial cannot use Cunning Redirection if he used Reckless on his last turn.

TACTICS

The enlightened minotaur combines his physical strength with his tactical mind to set his team up for success, preferring to fight with his allies on his terms and leveraging his own physicality to disrupt foes. When supported by his crew Ezekial uses Charge, Cunning Redirection, and the grapple or prone effects from his Multiattack to set up one or more of his spy allies for sneak attack. When encountered alone he relies on his Chatty feature to avoid opportunity attacks while battering spellcasters and rogues with Charges, utilizing Cunning Redirection to stay away from heavy hitters.

Ezekial rarely uses his Reckless feature, choosing instead to remain in control, combining his strength with sound tactics. However adventurers can banter with the enlightened minotaur, making a DC 14 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check to taunt him. On a success he unleashes his wild side. With multiple attacks and using Reckless, Ezekial can be just as dangerous this way but he should also quickly fall to a focused assault.

Plot Hooks

- A merchant selling rare tomes—including a first edition copy of the history book *Everwhen*—is nervous that she has become one of the enlightened minotaur's marks...and she's right! Ezekial is setting up his crew to hit the merchant's vault and it is up to the adventurers to stop him.
- A mage is looking for the rare *The Vortex's Sobriquet* and learns that Ezekial's crew stole the tome. Unfortunately Ezekial already read the book and sold it to a foreign merchant. The adventurers are petitioned by the mage to track down the unique text or get the information he needs from Ezekial.
- The party ends up in possession of a *tome of understanding* which Ezekial desperately wants to read. The enlightened minotaur's crew begins tailing the PCs and eventually attempts to steal the book. Once Ezekial has it he and his team flee, knowing that adventurers are bad for business.
- Ezekial hunts down a monk who wrote his favorite lyricized history, *A Journey for Monarchs*. The enlightened minotaur kidnaps the author, forcing the monk to instruct him in rhetoric and verse. However, the monk herself has ulterior motives and convinces Ezekial to help her assassinate the mentor of one of the adventurers. The PC might have a vision of Ezekial and the monk plotting, or might have no warning—able only to seek vengeance.
- A brutal murder takes place at an art gallery. An inquisitor believes Ezekial is the culprit and asks the adventurers to investigate. They are surprised when the enlightened minotaur finds them first and proclaims his innocence, instead giving them a clue towards the true killer. Meanwhile, Ezekial robs the art gallery while everyone else is preoccupied with the murder. 🕵️