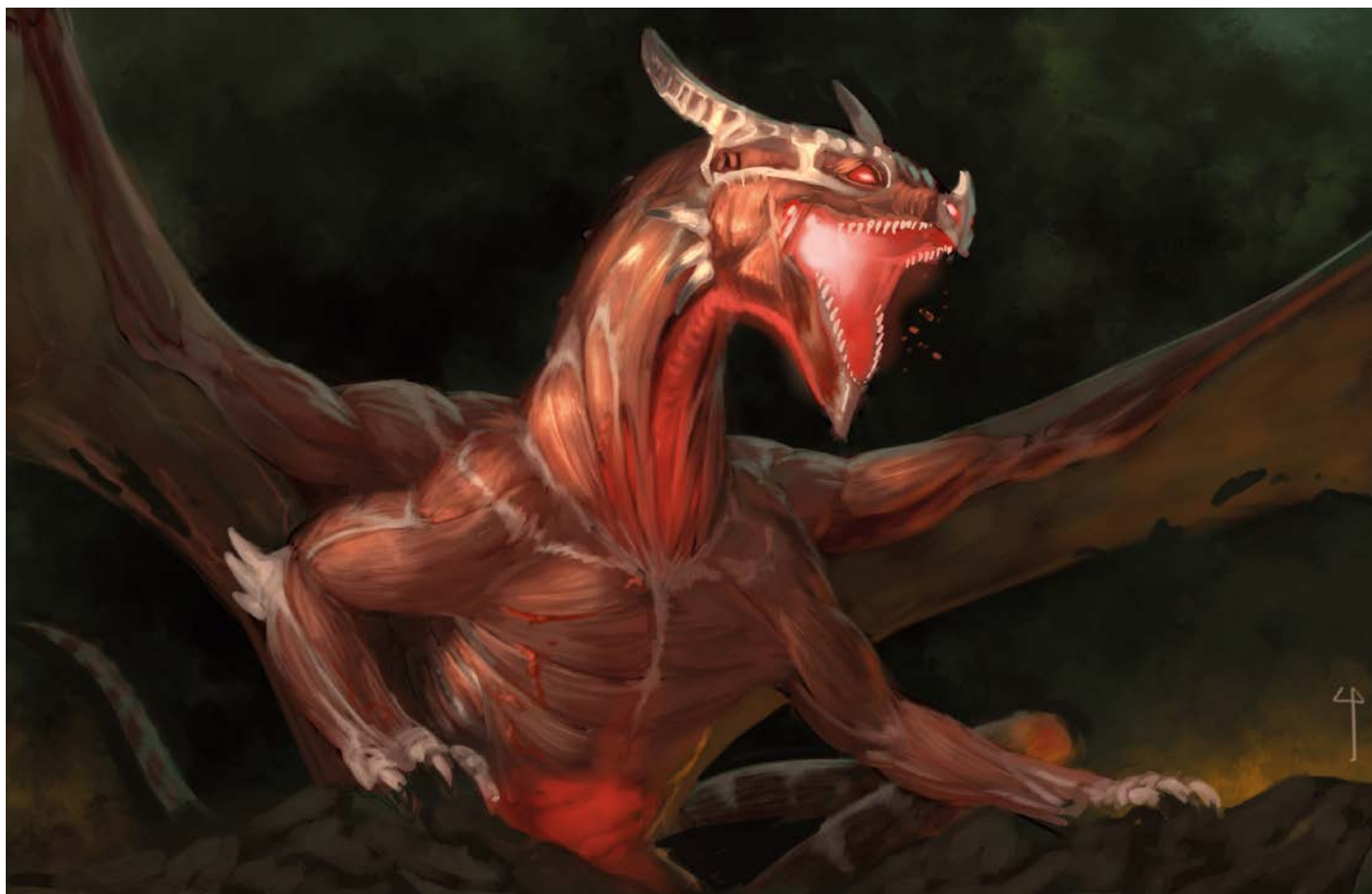




## VILLAIN SPOTLIGHT

# BEZKUSMET THE UNSCALED

**T**ales of dragons are common enough—terrifying crimson-winged monsters that hold entire regions in their clawed grip, insatiable ebony-scaled villains that drown whole societies in death, majestic waterborne serpents that impose their will upon the waves—but none are like Bezkusmet the Unscaled.

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Some laugh at the “naked dragon” and others question if he was ever truly draconic at all, but those that have crossed his path know that he is dubious and depraved, unforgiving in all respects, perseverant to a fault, and utterly consumed with achieving his own goals with no concern whatsoever for who might suffer in his hubris.

Yet this was not always so. For decades Bezkusmet was a kindly gold-scaled serpent dwelling atop Dotyk Mountain, watching over the lands nearby and intervening only when absolutely necessary to stop encroaching evils too great for local folk to end unaided. He was both hero and legend to the settlements beneath his winged shadow, allowing each to rule themselves as they saw fit with by virtue of a promise long ago to never interfere with their sovereignties. No tithes were required by the gold serpent and he rarely accepted gifts as thanks for his occasional help, ever generous to the lesser creatures that lived and died with all the permanence of sand in the wind.

Such a sluggish accumulation of wealth brought both Bezkusmet’s aging and growth to a crawl. Although a stout draconic youth with a sizable hoard inherited from his mother, centuries passed and he grew in stature only a few inches. This did not trouble the gold dragon however and he delighted in befriending the more mortal humanoids dwelling below, mastering their crafts and traveling amongst them to better know their plights.

Bezkusmet’s fall lay upon the shoulders of commoners with the majority of the weight on the halfling Vrum Highshot. The rambunctious little mountaineer first met the gold dragon in the midst of a calamitous fall, saved from certain death by scaled wings. Shortly afterward—unbeknownst to

the halfling as Bezkusmet assumed the shape of a shortfolk named Reli Flintdraft—the two became steadfast companions. Orphaned by a bandit attack but truly a fine soul, “Reli” was graciously accepted into the Highshot clan and beloved by Vrum’s relatives. All save for one.

Cousin Briope couldn’t see through Bezkusmet’s disguise but knew something about him was wrong, disliking him immediately. The halfling suspected that this new arrival so beloved by her family was the same dragon that Vrum so frequently spoke of, the coincidence of “Reli” appearing not long after her kin’s brush with death too striking to ignore. Her curiosity saw her journey far in search of a diviner that could reveal the truth of the mysterious halfling’s nature, and after almost a decade traveling she finally came across a seer (actually a disguised draconic rival) that unveiled the gold dragon’s trickery. The potent “mage” uncovered something even greater to Briope: that she was supernaturally unlucky, [able to bend destiny itself to her will](#) and a nexus of misfortune. Suddenly Bezkusmet’s invasion into her family’s lives, the poor trade that plagued her time with her mercantile kin, and the cure for her maladies were brought into focus—she decided that the gold dragon needed to die.

Briope returned to her homeland with grizzled and experienced dragon hunters hidden as her caravan guards, slowly visiting each of her relatives in turn to reveal the true identity of Reli Flintdraft. Most were shocked and dismayed to learn that a gold dragon counted them as friends, and with the indignity of the ruse mixed with her powers of persuasion they turned against Bezkusmet, luring him into dozens of failed ambushes and traps—and the few that remained loyal to the family’s adopted draconic son were discovered dead, wounded in such a way as to frame him.

It was in the hearth of Vrum Highshot that Bezkusmet confronted Briope, transforming at the

sight of his trustworthy friend's murdered corpse—the gold dragon swallowed her whole before laying waste to her hunters and fleeing back to his lair. When the remainder of the Highshot clan followed seeking vengeance for Briope's death he lost all of his faith in the short folk, thrown into a rage so great that he slew them to the last with blasts of fire. Yet as the battle continued his scorching flames became less potent, dwindling to puffs of smoke before the final sword fell.

Though she was dead in his stomach Briope had her revenge. When the gold dragon swallowed her it was not just chance-imbued flesh that he ate but six *stones of good luck* as well, and rather than provide him good fortune the mixture has wreaked havoc on his magical biology. Wrapped in depression over the chaos his ruse had caused with the Highshot Clan, Bezkusmet barely noticed that something was wrong as his scales lost their luster, his anxiety only growing into overwhelming panic when they became as transparent as glass.

First the "naked" dragon thought to amass a great hoard in the hopes that enough gold would bring resilience back to his scales. When every coin from the lands around Dotyk Mountain were gathered in his lair he finally grew in stature but his maladies remained. Bezkusmet next turned instead to halflings, believing that the natural luck embedded in their flesh might reverse the damage wrought upon his body by Briope's malignant curse and relishing each small folk soul he's extinguished. This has failed spectacularly and though he does not realize it, with every halfling he eats the sickness that has overtaken him becomes worse. His desperation consumes more of him every day and motivates Bezkusmet to ever greater lengths to restore his draconic majesty—there's no telling if or when his suffering will ever stop.

## APPEARANCE

Dragons are known to be terrifying but all pale in comparison to Bezkusmet the Unscaled. As his name suggests there is no hue or substance to his draconic scute leaving his musculature and skeleton bared for the world to see, lattices of finger-thick veins and arteries the size of a human's wrist inexorably pumping blood across his utterly naked body. Only a thin sheen of transparent magic holds Bezkusmet's organs and muscles in place, the last of the twisted supernatural energies of his birthright all that keeps him intact.

and subterfuge his warped psyche has taken to their extremes, making every sentence he speaks drenched in lies and leaving no potentially useful locale unexplored (regardless of how secure or well-protected it might be). The dragon's desperation drives him to commit acts he once would have fought fiercely to curtail or stop, but the purity of soul he once knew has long since been replaced with a creeping horror over what might become of him if he cannot undo Briope's jinx.

## PERSONALITY

Having truly embraced a coterie of thievery-prone halflings (good-natured as they may have been) has imbued in Bezkusmet a predilection for deception

## ACTIVITIES

Now—with the lands he once cherished and protected abandoned by all—Bezkusmet journeys in search of artifacts with maddened plans to sap them of magical power to supplement his own. The persistent injuries inflicted by Briope have made him vengeful upon all halflings and he has a taste for the short folks' tender meat, only sparing those able to help his next gambit in the quest to regain the draconic majesty denied him: *orbs of dragonkind*.

## MOTIVATIONS

Bezkusmet once had friends and even kin but he has forsaken all things in pursuit of a cure to his maladies. He cannot help but prey upon halflings, using them to gather information about artifacts in an area before slaughtering them all—both to sate his revengeful bloodlust and to discourage others from seeking out the enchanted items.



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# Bezkusmet the Unscaled

Huge dragon, chaotic neutral rogue (thief) 5

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 133 (17d12+5d8+88)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 21 (+5) | 20 (+5) | 19 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) | 20 (+5) |

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Wis +4, Cha +9

**Skills** Deception +13, Insight +4, Intimidation +9, Investigation +6, Perception +8, Persuasion +9, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +13

**Damage Vulnerabilities** force

**Damage Resistances** fire

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Halfling, Thieves' Cant

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)



**Amphibious.** Bezkusmet can breathe air and water.

**Cunning Action (1/Turn).** Bezkusmet can take a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, Hide, or Use Object action, make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, or to use thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock.

**Fortune Points (3/Day).** Bezkusmet can spend 1 fortune point to reroll an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, or to force an attacker to reroll an attack made against him.

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

**Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** Bezkusmet deals an extra 10 (3d6) 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 Bezkusmet that isn't incapacitated and Bezkusmet doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Bezkusmet can use his Frightful Presence. He then makes three attacks: one with his bite and two with his claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 16 (2d10+5) magical piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) magical slashing damage.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of Bezkusmet's choice that is within 120 feet of him and aware of him must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. Failing the save by 5 or more causes a creature to begin babbling for the duration. While babbling a creature is incapable of normal speech or spellcasting. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effects on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effects end for it, the creature is immune to Bezkusmet's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

**Deformative Breath (Recharge 6).** Bezkusmet exhales gas in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or have disadvantage on Strength-based attack rolls, Strength checks, and Strength saving throws for 1 minute. Failing the save by 5 or more causes a creature's skin to turn transparent for 1 week, during which it has disadvantage on Charisma checks. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the weakening effects on itself on a success.

**Change Shape.** Bezkusmet magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (Bezkusmet's choice). In a new form, Bezkusmet retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

## REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When an attacker Bezkusmet can

see hits him with an attack, the dragon can use his reaction to halve the attack's damage against him.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Bezkusmet 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. Bezkusmet regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

- **Jinx the Dying.** Until the start of Bezkusmet's next turn, creatures within 30 feet of him have disadvantage on Death saving throws.
- **Lucky Detection.** Bezkusmet makes a Wisdom (Perception) check with advantage. This check is made as if he had cast *detect magic*, though no action is required to see magical auras.
- **Spread Misfortune (2 actions).** Bezkusmet chooses one creature he can see within 60 feet, forcing it to succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on all d20 rolls until the start of the dragon's next turn.

## LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing all initiative ties), Bezkusmet can use one of his lair action options. He can't do so while incapacitated or otherwise unable to take actions. If surprised, he can't use one until after his first turn in the combat. All of Bezkusmet's lair actions have a duration of 1 round.

- Roll 1d4. On any result but a 4, all ability checks are made with disadvantage. On a 4, all ability checks are made with advantage. This has no effect on Bezkusmet.
- Roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, all saving throws are made with disadvantage. On a 6, all saving throws are made with advantage. This has no effect on Bezkusmet.
- Roll 1d8. On a 1 or 2, all attack rolls are made with disadvantage. On an 8, all attack rolls are made with advantage. This has no effect on Bezkusmet.

