Total Party Kill

BESTIARY VOL. 1

MONSTERS TO CHALLENGE VETERAN HEROES



5E COMPATIBLE

WRITTEN BY
Ryan Servis

PRODUCED BY
2CGaming



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Introduction

"Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure...than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat."

–Theodore Roosevelt, Battlemaster

PREFACE

Imagine you have been running a game of 5th Edition for some time now, and the characters have passed the 10th level benchmark. As their powers increase, you find yourself struggling to field compelling foes that threaten these seemingly invincible heroes with defeat. As you scour the world in search of resources to improve your game's monsters, you find yourself spending more and more time customizing a handful of foes to meet your encounter needs. It's exhausting, time-consuming, and frustrating to see an ambush undone by a simple *banishment* spell or to watch your dragon boss fight be butchered in a single turn by a paladin's critical. This pain has driven many an experienced DM to retire a campaign when it should be at its most exciting. Whether you are looking for a solution to these aforementioned problems or just need some deadly, high-level foes for your next game, the *Total Party Kill Bestiary* is here to inspire fear and shred character sheets, no matter the level of your players' characters.

The creatures in this book will eat skilled adventurers for breakfast. Overconfident or careless characters will find themselves petrified by the song of a beautiful fey bird, slain instantly by an undead horseman heralding death, or the favorite chew toy of a ravenous brown dragon. These monsters will feel right at home in your game world, lurking in its darkest corners or conquering nations. Bizarre, mysterious, malevolent, or virtuous, these creatures are exclusively high-level threats suitable only for veteran heroes. Wherever these foes appear, they will make an impact, putting your players' skills to the test and contributing to a vibrant and dangerous campaign.

VIOLENT CONTENT WARNING

The *Totally Party Kill Bestiary* contains many fantastic and wonderous creatures to delight your players. It also contains some pretty dark and gruesome critters that will do gnarly stuff to PCs who encounter them. We feel that such designs add an air of menace and danger that inspires real fear and disgust in players; emotions can be just as important to the RPG experience as fun, laughs, and thrills. However, that doesn't mean they are for everyone, and you should take the prospect of integrating creatures that push this boundary seriously. The last thing we want is to see someone walk away from your game table because of something we made, so please talk to your players about how far you can push violence against their characters using some of the monsters contained with these pages. You don't have to give everything away but do your best to ensure the people at your table don't get hurt.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Designing monsters is our favorite part of writing RPGs, and thanks to those devious supporters who backed this project, we are privileged to bring these deadly creations to your game table. Every character slain by these fearsome foes is done so in their name, an outcome made all the more certain by our dedicated play testers and critics who helped this project behind the scenes. To our backers at levels big and small, we make the following dedication.

Defeat is as noble a teacher as victory, and thanks to you we can share this lesson with countless 5th Edition gamers. You inspired us to use every ounce of our skill, imagination, and experience to create creatures beyond our wildest expectations. Between fiendish cackles and devious smiles, we wrote this book and truly believe it to be an important work that will change the way people play 5th Edition. For that opportunity and experience we offer our humblest thanks.

In loving memory of James A. Leslie, an avid gamer, RPG enthusiast, and online D&D freelance writer. His fun loving nature, generosity, and gift of humor drew many friends and many strangers (soon-to-be friends) to his memorable and inventive D&D nights. As he once wrote, "Let your dice tell your story."

- The 2CGaming Team

Special thanks go to Carter for compiling errata for us to address. We would also like to thank our contributing writers on this project, each of which conceived of and wrote a monster group found within. When your group gets TPK'd by a squad of valkyrie, hoard of voidborn, or a malevolent fell-beyonder, you will know who to thank!

Ben King – Voidborn - Ben King is a gamer and designer living in Indiana with his wife and their very own beast of a dog. When he's not busy working as a registered veterinary technician, he's trying to find the most elusive beast of all: more time for TTRPGs.

Grant Ellis – Fell Beyonders - Grant Ellis is an independent content creator for tabletop roleplaying games and is known as the Bad Boy of Gaming. He has leveraged 2CGaming products to challenge parties across a variety streaming platforms.

Talio – Valkyrie - Talio has been running games for a few years now. When he's not working professionally you can find him working on his home brew campaign. He hopes everyone has fun with the book and reminds all the dm's that monsters are great, but a good story brings it all together.

WHAT IS IN THIS BOOK

This book is more than just another appendix of monsters. It is a tactical assortment of brutally dangerous enemies organized into groups for optimal use by a DM. In addition to a group's combat statistics, also included are crucial tactical information to run challenging encounters, lore to seamlessly integrate these creatures into your game world, and other fun details that showcases monsters like never before. Almost every monster found within this book has a challenge rating of 10 or higher and is designed to withstand some of the greatest high-level character strengths. This is not another monster encyclopedia. This book's content is intended to be used in a way most appropriate for your game and empowers you to do so. Whether you need a villain to foreshadow a coming apocalypse or a devious threat that pushes players to their limits, this book provides you with both the statistics and the tools to make that possible.

Anatomy of a Monster Group

Monsters within this book are compiled into thematic groups that share a background, lore, and ecology; imaginatively named "monster groups." Each monster group section contains its members' combat classifications, favors and foils, which member possesses the fearsome "TPK brand," lore, tactics, plot hooks, treasure, ecology, and special notes by iconic gnome bard, Talien Vos Karven. This section details the significance of each of those elements, which are critical for you to understand to achieve best results when designing encounters featuring said monsters.

Monster Classifications

Monsters within this book are classified into groups based on their strengths and abilities, which helps a DM easily understand their role on the battlefield. Each monster possesses a classification, with the most powerful among them being "Elites" who are proficient in multiple classifications simultaneously. By understanding this system of classifications, you can craft encounters that deliver on a specific challenge you want your players to experience. Do you want your heroes to dodge sniper fire as they storm a fortress? Use an artillery creature. Looking for a fearsome beast that crushes adventurers beneath its feet? Try a brute. Perhaps you need a final boss for your dungeon, in which case all you must do is find an appropriate elite. This system is a throwback to 4th Edition and helps create encounters that deliver on a specific style of play. The details of each monster classification and how to use them can be found in this section.

Artillery. The artillery classification indicates ranged combat specialists with abilities that can harry enemies from afar. Only the best snipers can match an artillery creature at ranged combat, which can often unleash firepower that puts even the most optimized *eldritch blast*–slinging warlock to shame. Artillery creatures are vulnerable at close range, relying on allies or their own evasive abilities to stay out of melee. An artillery wants to end a fight from afar, keeping its enemies on the defensive and struggling to find cover.

Brute. Brutes are brutal melee combatants specializing in giving out as much punishment as they take. Free from player interference, a brute quickly pulverizes vulnerable characters and dismantles tactical advantages. Brutes can be counted on to take powerful hits and often do so to protect vulnerable allies or objectives. A brute seeks to be the focus of a fight, soaking up punishment and returning the favor tenfold.

Controller. Controllers may not be the ones who kill a character, but they certainly make things easier for their allies. Controllers unleash debilitating effects that impair or cripple their enemies and are most effective when paired with more directly lethal creatures able to capitalize on advantages the controller provides. A controller wants to secure victory through tactical superiority, placing itself and its allies into a winning position, the tabletop equivalent of setting up a checkmate.

Elite. Elites are monsters with enough diverse strengths to fit multiple classifications. Only the most powerful of creatures are elites and possess few weaknesses that adventurers can exploit. As rare as they are powerful, elites can be considered bosses that lurk at the end of a dangerous dungeon or the climax of an epic adventure. An elite is often legendary and crushes opposition with overwhelming power.

Leader. Leaders are masterful support creatures that aid allies with healing, magical enhancement, and other powerful buffs. Leaders rarely possess significant kill potential, focusing instead on teamwork and keeping their deadly allies in top fighting shape.

Welcome, dear reader. I can see since you've purchased this tome that not only do you have impeccable literary taste but a hunger for knowledge that exceeds what most of the common folk would call "reasonable." I am Talien Vos Karven, acclaimed ecologist from the College of Lore and master adventurer. It is with no small personal risk to myself and my companions that I have compiled an encyclopedia of what is, without a doubt, this world's most fearsome creatures. Within its pages you will find every scrap of information I could discover about these formidable foes, from questionable hearsay to my own firsthand experiences. While much of what you read here is objective fact, I have taken the liberty of adding my own brilliant suppositions, insights, and theories about many horrors I encountered. Should you have the misfortune of encountering one of these creatures, I hope that you survive to expand upon this knowledge. Our existence is a fragile thing, and I hope that through understanding these most dangerous forces, we can better protect that which matters most.

– Talien Vos Karven
Head Ecologist of the College of Lore

Leaders need at least a few allies to help, preferring those that help them accomplish their encounter objectives. In combat, a leader alleviates harm on its allies, undoing damage with an efficiency that is nearly impossible to outclass.

Lurker. Master ambushers and assassins, lurkers strike first and hard. Using evasion and stealth to achieve their goals, lurkers are slippery foes that are difficult to lock down and destroy. Because adventurers travel in groups, most lurkers require the assistance of other creatures to finish the job. A lurker seeks to systematically and swiftly eliminate threats, taking heroes out of commission before they have a chance to respond.

Skirmisher. Mobility specialists, skirmishers use hit-and-run tactics to deliver precise blows while avoiding reprisal. A skirmisher can swiftly capitalize on a vulnerable enemy or disrupt a tactical advantage. Clever skirmishers are good at teamwork, waiting for the precise moment to strike or baiting frustrated adventurers into chasing them into traps. A skirmisher wants to frustrate and harass its target, too dangerous to ignore but too elusive to easily kill.

Soldier. Tactical melee combatants of the highest caliber, a creature with the soldier classification is an implacable barrier that cannot be overcome with brute force. These creatures often plant themselves firmly between any force seeking to assail weaker allies, punishing those who injure their comrades with a frightful vengeance. A solider never fights alone and wants to enable and protect its more vulnerable allies to achieve victory.

Favors and Foils

An understanding of a creature's strengths and weaknesses is essential to a successful encounter. Along with a monster's classification will be a

TITANIC CREATURES

The *Total Party Kill Bestiary* features a number of creatures with a unique set of traits, summarized by classifying it as a titanic creature. A titanic creature is truly massive – with a unique anatomy that doesn't make sense for it to be treated as a single target. It has multiple sections, each of which functions like an independent creature, relying on the monster's core statistics for most of its effects. Each section has the same AC, resistances, immunities, and saving throw bonuses as the base statistical block of the creature. Sections are affected by conditions and other effects individually, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the section's traits. A titanic creature's statistics describe how much space the creature takes up along with each of its sections, as well as its height. If you're using physical miniatures, you're unlikely to have a massive miniature that's appropriate, so you may have to improvise something. Because a titanic creature is so big, creatures smaller than it can always occupy the same space, or move through the titanic creature's space without penalty, and titanic creatures neither take nor provoke opportunity attacks.

Every titanic creature has a core section. If the "core" section is reduced to zero hit points, the titanic creature is slain. Other sections that are reduced to zero hit points become incapacitated for as long as it has zero hit points, but the creature as a whole remains alive and well. Some creatures can restore incapacitated sections during a fight while others can't. In general, unless a titanic creature has an ability that allows it to restore an incapacitated section, it can only do so if it finishes a long rest, which allows each section to individually spend Hit Dice to recover hit points.

In combat, every section has a fixed initiative result that it acts on. On each section's turn, if that section has a speed, the entire creature can move during that section's turn, following normal rules for movement. In some cases, a creature may have a certain speed on a specific section's turn, such as a dragon with a "wings" section only having a fly speed when its "wings" act.

Characters can attempt to climb a Titanic creature as part of their movement by making an Athletics or Acrobatics check (their choice) opposed by the creature's Athletics or Acrobatics check (DM's choice). Success means they can move up to half their speed along the creature, failure means they stay where they are, whether that's on the ground or upon the creature. Making this attempt doesn't require an action, but a creature can only attempt it once per turn. If a creature takes damage while climbing a titanic creature or a forced movement effect would push or pull them while climbing, they must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw (their choice) against a DC of half the damage taken or 10, whichever is higher. Success means they hold on, remaining where they are. Failure means they fall, dropping to the ground in the titanic creature's space and taking falling damage as appropriate. Titanic creatures have disadvantage on all attacks against creatures that are currently climbing them.

You should use your best judgment when it comes to targeting a creature's sections. Ranged attacks should be able to target any section if the caster is within range of the creature, but melee attacks and touch spells can only target sections the character could conceivably reach. A fighter with a sword, for example, isn't going to be able to attack the head of a 60-foot tall golem, he'll be stuck hacking at the legs.

Likewise, use your best judgment when it comes to applying status effects to the titanic creature. Casting dominate monster on a dragon's tail, for example, probably won't work. It would need to target the creature's head or its core to be effective. Likewise, you probably can't knock a golem's arm prone. Otherwise, most effects will only affect one section of the creature. For example, you could stun a creature's arms or legs, preventing them from acting, but the rest of the creature would act as normal. Finally, most titanic creatures are immune to forced movement and teleportation effects unless they wish to be affected.

To avoid making dozens of rules to cover every possibility, control of the details is in your hands. Go with what feels right from the descriptions provided above and your own sense of fair play.

short list of character abilities and features that favor or foil the monster's own abilities and features. Use this information to ensure your encounters challenge the players in the right ways, giving them a specific path to victory. Some monsters favor no features, meaning there are no optimal paths to succeed against it.

Favors. Which character features, classes and abilities perform well against the monster.

Foils. Which character features, classes and abilities perform poorly against the monster.



Total Party Kill Brand

With a book full of deadly, high-level monsters, it is difficult to imagine there are even more lethal threats. Unfortunately for would-be heroes, a majority of monster groups within this tome have a single member that is marked with a special skull emblem, declaring it a lethal threat. These monsters are certified party-killers, guaranteed to deliver the toughest fight possible for their challenge rating. Each branded creature possesses abilities that when applied by a skilled DM make for an extraordinarily dangerous encounter. Such creatures should never be used lightly and only if you are absolutely certain your players can handle being wiped out. These creatures do not fight fair. Their abilities are devastating and overwhelming when used correctly, not only to adventurers but to the world around them. Consider carefully the consequences to both your narrative and gameplay when implementing such a foe.

Talien's Companions

Many of the creatures presented in this book have a statement by the gnome bard Talien Vos Karven, sharing his personal experiences with the monster, along with the occasional insight from his adventuring companions. These sections are examples of in-character assessments of the creatures found in each monster group, and we encourage you to use them as examples when considering how NPCs in your game world view and talk about such creatures. If you wish to make Talien or his companions a part of your game, some basic details are provided below, and keep an eye out for their appearances in our other projects.

- **Kaya Thul.** Aaismar Artifacer
- **Masako.** Half-Orc Barbarian
- **Talien Vos Karven.** Deep Gnome Bard
- **Elkus.** Mountain Dwarf Cleric
- **Ionia.** Wood Elf Druid
- **Heletak-Pyeha.** Goliath Elementalist
- **Zau-Hek.** Dark Elf Fighter
- **Slate.** Battleforged Monk
- **Sister Solaria.** Human Paladin
- **Haloa Okalani.** Bronze Dragonborn Ranger
- **Ava Sonos.** Human Rogue
- **Shauna Troublefoot.** Lightfoot Halfling Sorcerer
- **Johan K'lay.** Half Elf Warlock
- **Archmagister King.** Tiefling Wizard

Lore

While every monster in this book is presented with the usual array of information about its background and features, information that a DM can make available to players is also included. When your players want to research a foe before facing it in battle, you can allow them to attempt certain group ability checks to gain valuable lore that will improve their odds of success against it. Groups wishing to attempt such checks should make significant efforts to even attempt the roll—gathering evidence, tracking movements, consulting wise beings, or delving through forgotten tomes. Once the party has done so, they may attempt a group ability check as detailed in the monster's lore section. Depending on the result, the party gains valuable information about the monster's behavior and abilities, examples of which are found in each monster's lore table. You should alter this section and the lore therein at your discretion to better fit your game world. Unless the characters are extremely powerful, give them a chance to gain lore about creatures found in this book. It can make for a meaningful downtime activity between adventures, and odds are it won't spoil the encounter. If they choose to pass on the opportunity, the players have no one to blame but themselves when your monster lays them out.



Tactics

Monsters with a high challenge rating are far more complicated than their low-class comrades. This makes the DM's job harder, so it is essential to combat the ever-expanding powers characters attain at high levels. To mitigate the challenges of running encounters featuring complex creatures, each monster has a tactics section with recommended average, easier, and harder tactics. Use these suggestions to cut down on preparation time and as a reference when you aren't sure what your monster should do. No matter what your players' skill level, this section will help you craft a finely tuned encounter of any desired difficulty.

Plot Hooks

When you find a monster you'd like to include in your game, this section provides you with fantasy scenarios to make it a part of your game world. These hooks can be small story elements to put your creature on the map or important plot threads that tempt players into going on a monster hunt that spans a dozen sessions.

Treasure

A hard-won victory deserves a suitable reward, and many of the creatures in the *Total Party Kill Bestiary* possess valuable equipment or are made of rare components that can be forged into useful items. When a monster has a treasure section, it is still at your discretion what the characters receive as a reward after defeating the monster. However, it is recommended you grant these rewards for particularly demanding encounters. On top of making victory taste all the sweeter, such treasures serve as trophies to remind players about their past conflicts and make for a good story to tell at the local tavern.

Ecology

Even the most fiendish of monsters have a home, and their ecology section details where they prefer to live, explore, and hunt. Use a creature's ecology when considering its role in your game world. While you can certainly plop any monster into a dungeon without context, creatures of power have a difficult time existing without making some impact on the world around them. By letting your creatures have something to do in their free time, you can foreshadow an encounter or motivate players to act against it.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Whether they be obnoxious do-gooders spreading virtue about your grimdark game world or self-serving murderers smashing your intricate narratives to pieces, eventually characters need a good old fashion beat down. To suffer defeat is a meaningful RPG experience, and to snatch victory from the jaws of failure is always a campaign highlight. While the "TPK" in the book's title need not be taken literally, every game needs a few moments when the players wonder, *Is this the end?*

To make best use of this book and its monsters, you will need the 5th Edition core rules on hand to construct encounters. Your skills as a DM will come into play while implementing this content into your world. While it's tempting to completely wreck your players with an impossibly powerful creature, the goal of the *Total Party Kill Bestiary* is to put the most powerful characters in 5th Edition through fights that challenge and excite them. You should familiarize yourself with the general rules of encounter building, particularly those concerning combat encounter difficulty.

Because these monsters are organized into groups, where there is one, there are often more. Running a monster from this book can be the characters' first introduction to what becomes an entire family of lethal beasts, making them ideal for recurring enemies that continually raise the difficulty bar. Most of the time, characters can observe and interact with monster groups without fighting. These monsters can be more than deadly threats that lurk in a dungeon. They can tell a story, facilitate world building, and provide character niches that intrigue and disgust your players.

How the Bestiary Measures Challenge Rating

Every monster in 5th Edition has a challenge rating that indicates what its difficulty should be relative to characters of a certain level, and the ones found here are no different. Using challenge rating appropriately with these creatures can result in easy, medium, hard, and deadly encounters according to the general rules of encounter building. This section talks about using the *Total Party Kill Bestiary* and the 5th Edition rules for determining challenge rating to create a quality high-level experience you can find nowhere else.

HIGH-LEVEL PLAY & LADY LUCK

With high-level play in 5th Edition comes big numbers. As a creature's chance to hit, save DCs, AC, and other features improve, so too do its odds of success in its endeavors or chances of foiling its attackers. Where the d20 was once the biggest factor in determining success at lower levels, at high levels a creature's (or character's) significant bonuses to their advantages weigh more heavily. A creature with a +20 to hit is probably going to land most of its attacks regardless of its d20 rolls, and its damage rolls are going to be more consistent with a +10 bonus from its Strength. With the exception of the natural 1 and natural 20, this means you can expect a more average result from creatures in your encounters with fewer twists from wacky rolls. Beware! This consistency also applies to your encounter's weaknesses. Having no bonuses to an Intelligence saving throw means your creature has almost no chance of beating a DC 19 saving throw versus a *feeblemind* spell. While this truth requires more forethought when building your encounters, it also makes predicting encounter outcomes and dynamics a lot easier. Use this to your advantage to deliver on more precise results and encounter goals!

What Changes at High Levels

To a group of adventurers, death at 1st level is a catastrophe, at 6th level a significant inconvenience, at 10th level a pit stop, and at 15th level a speedbump. When you are dealing with characters who can exile their foes to other planes, *wish* reality into new forms, or enslave a small army of minions, providing a challenge means thinking about the game differently. While your encounter might technically be "deadly," killing a 16th-level fighter doesn't mean much when his cleric friend burns a single 3rd-level spell slot to cast *revivify*. When thinking about encounter difficulty for characters of 10th level or higher, we recommend changing the goals of encounters to reflect the following instead of their traditional explanations. When using monsters from the *Total Party Kill Bestiary* with encounter-building tools, these are the intended difficulty results. When using monsters from other resources, you probably have to assume the challenge ratings provided are actually lower than what they need to be to achieve these kinds of encounter results.

- **Easy.** An easy encounter requires almost no effort to overcome. High-level characters will blaze through these encounters quickly and efficiently (sometimes with a single spell cast), making them better suited for storytelling tools than actual challenges. High level heroes have better things to do than battle weak foes that do not test their abilities. A party can handle an a near unlimited number of these encounters in an adventuring day.
- **Medium.** A medium encounter should be dangerous to any party that does not take it seriously. Player arrogance, laziness, or ignorance should cost the party significant resources, while a well-prepared and focused group should not be in mortal danger unless they get supremely unlucky. A party can handle between four to five of these encounters in a single adventuring day.
- **Hard.** A hard encounter is a brutal experience. If a party goes in unprepared, they will suffer dire consequences: deaths, massive resource expenditures, and negative impacts to the story. Even a party fully prepared for the trials ahead will be tested, having to apply every ounce of their skill and creativity to succeed. A party can handle between two to three of these encounters in a single adventuring day.
- **Deadly.** A deadly encounter is an extraordinary event that can smash even the most powerful heroes into pieces. Every time you run one of these encounters, an unprepared party should be guaranteed defeat in one fashion or another. Nothing the party does should be enough to assure victory, only provide them a fighting chance. Your players should feel like the encounter threatens to end their adventuring career and should require an extraordinary amount of skill (and luck) to emerge unscathed. Most deadly encounters aren't lethal enough to actually end the campaign but should have significant consequences for failure. However, if you have the iron will required to let your game end based on the encounter's outcome, using an appropriate creature bearing the TPK brand can make that a reality. A party can handle one of these encounters in a single adventuring day, commonly requiring a long rest immediately afterward.

Bestiary by Challenge Rating

The monsters within the *Total Party Kill Bestiary* are presented here in order by challenge rating.

BESTIARY BY CHALLENGE RATING

CHALLENGE RATING	CREATURE NAME	MONSTER GROUP	CREATURE TYPE	CLASSIFICATION	LEGENDARY	TITANIC	TPK BRAND
5	Enokitake	Enokitake	Plant	Brute	No	No	No
6	Wyrmling Brown Dragon	Brown Dragons	Dragon	Brute	No	No	No
8	Wyrmling Imperial Dragon	Imperial Dragons	Dragon	Skirmisher	No	No	No
10	Banded Agony Viper	Assassin Vipers	Beast	Lurker	No	No	No
10	Gallium Goo	Metallic Oozes	Ooze	Brute	No	No	No
10	Tiger of Legend	Beasts of Legend	Beast	Brute	Yes	No	No
10	Twisting Hate	Maleophages	Ooze	Lurker	No	No	No
10	Wandering Deathroller	Demon Seeds	Plant	Skirmisher	No	No	No
11	Drakoptera	Vermindrakes	Monstrosity	Skirmisher	No	No	No
11	Giant Elk of Legend	Beasts of Legend	Beast	Brute	Yes	No	No
11	Living Abjuration	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Conjuration	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Divination	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Enchantment	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Evocation	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Illusion	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Necromancy	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	Living Transmutation	Animus Arcana	Construct	Controller	No	No	No
11	River-Blessed	Nartheneen	Humanoid	Leader	No	No	No
12	Burrowing Traproot	Demon Seeds	Plant	Lurker	No	No	No
12	Death Wrack	Maleophages	Ooze	Lurker	No	No	No
12	Fortress Divine	Hammer Angels	Celestial	Soldier	No	No	No

BESTIARY BY CHALLENGE RATING

CHALLENGE RATING	CREATURE NAME	MONSTER GROUP	CREATURE TYPE	CLASSIFICATION	LEGENDARY	TITANIC	TPK BRAND
12	Hadala-Lophi	Hadala-Lafeda	Fey	Controller	No	No	No
12	Octoshark	Abominable Hybrids	Monstrosity	Brute	No	No	No
12	Royal Crooning Spellwing	Birds of Paradise	Fey	Controller	No	No	No
12	Utterance of Damnation	Utterances of Truespeech	Humanoid	Elite	No	No	No
12	Young Brown Dragon	Brown Dragons	Dragon	Brute	No	No	No
13	Ferrophlegm	Metallic Oozes	Ooze	Skirmisher	No	No	No
13	Ironthorn Snipeshrub	Demon Seeds	Plant	Artillery	No	No	Yes
13	Living Galleon	Behemoth Mimics	Monstrosity	Lurker	No	Yes	No
13	Lynchwood	Lynchwoods	Plant	Brute	No	Yes	No
13	Sun-Cursed	Nartheneen	Humanoid	Soldier	No	No	No
13	Utterance of Blood	Utterances of Truespeech	Humanoid	Leader	No	No	No
13	Utterance of Erudition	Utterances of Truespeech	Humanoid	Controller	No	No	No
14	Drakuto	Vermindrakes	Monstrosity	Brute	No	No	No
14	Hadala-Levinoss	Hadala-Lafeda	Fey	Brute	No	No	No
14	Mind Warper	Maleophages	Ooze	Lurker	No	No	No
14	Null Tide	Voidborn	Aberration	Controller	No	No	No
14	Rakshasa Andhere	Rakshasa Arya	Fiend	Lurker	No	No	No
14	Sublime Chastity	Seven Holy Virtues	Celestial	Leader	No	No	No
14	Sword-Billed Stone Singer	Birds of Paradise	Fey	Controller	No	No	No
14	Utterance of Un-naming	Utterances of Truespeech	Humanoid	Artillery	No	No	Yes
15	Acidsap Gympie	Demon Seeds	Plant	Artillery	No	No	No
15	Emerald Shadow Mamba	Assassin Vipers	Beast	Skirmisher	Yes	No	No
15	Fell-murdona	Fell-Beyonders	Aberration	Controller	No	No	No
15	Maul Angelic	Hammer Angels	Celestial	Brute	No	No	No
15	Rakshasa Yoddha	Rakshasa Arya	Fiend	Brute	No	No	Yes
15	Young Imperial Dragon	Imperial Dragons	Dragon	Skirmisher	No	No	No
16	Eyes That Bite	Voidborn	Aberration	Brute	No	No	No
16	Fell-tormentão	Fell-Beyonders	Aberration	Brute	No	No	No
16	Living Keep	Behemoth Mimics	Monstrosity	Lurker	No	Yes	No
16	Ostoyae	Enokitake	Plant	Brute	Yes	No	Yes
16	Sleipnirian Pegasus	Valkyrie	Celestial	N/A	No	No	No
17	Champion of Famine	Apocalypse Dragoons	Undead	Controller	No	No	No
17	Ebon Pyromancer	Nartheneen	Humanoid	Controller	No	No	Yes
17	Fell-ordalius	Fell-Beyonders	Aberration	Lurker	No	No	No
17	Golden Emperor's Lyrebird	Birds of Paradise	Fey	Controller	Yes	No	Yes
17	Ice Archon	Elemental Archons	Elemental	Soldier	No	No	No
17	Rakshasa Haddiyon	Rakshasa Arya	Fiend	Artillery	No	No	No
17	Shield Maiden	Valkyrie	Celestial	Soldier	No	No	No
17	Tyrannosaurus Rex of Legend	Beasts of Legend	Beast	Brute	Yes	No	Yes

BESTIARY BY CHALLENGE RATING

CHALLENGE RATING	CREATURE NAME	MONSTER GROUP	CREATURE TYPE	CLASSIFICATION	LEGENDARY	TITANIC	TPK BRAND
18	Adult Brown Dragon	Brown Dragons	Dragon	Brute	Yes	No	No
18	Ahd Moar	Primeval Fey	Fey	Controller	No	No	No
18	Champion Fist	Hammer Angels	Celestial	Skirmisher	No	No	Yes
18	Concert of Lost Souls	Voidborn	Aberration	Skirmisher	No	No	Yes
18	Earth Archon	Elemental Archons	Elemental	Brute	No	No	No
18	Elder Strangler	Lynchwoods	Plant	Brute	No	Yes	No
18	Fell-ahng'el	Fell-Beyonders	Aberration	Artillery	Yes	No	Yes
18	Hadala-Medusae	Hadala-Lafeda	Fey	Controller	No	No	Yes
18	Slag Slime	Metallic Oozes	Ooze	Brute	Yes	No	Yes
18	Soul Rot	Maleophages	Ooze	Lurker	No	No	Yes
19	Adraknid	Vermindrakes	Monstrosity	Lurker	Yes	No	No
19	Champion of War	Apocalypse Dragoons	Undead	Brute	No	No	No
19	Fire Archon	Elemental Archons	Elemental	Brute	No	No	No
19	Gracious Humility	Seven Holy Virtues	Celestial	Skirmisher	No	No	Yes
19	Living Mage Tower	Behemoth Mimics	Monstrosity	Artillery	No	Yes	Yes
19	Wyrd Seer	Valkyrie	Celestial	Artillery	No	No	No
20	Kingslayer Cobra	Assassin Vipers	Beast	Lurker	No	No	Yes
20	Sharpythorapspidopustle	Abominable Hybrids	Monstrosity	Brute	No	No	No
20	Tasey-Am	Primeval Fey	Fey	Controller	No	No	No
21	Adult Imperial Dragon	Imperial Dragons	Dragon	Elite	Yes	No	No
21	Ancient Faerie Dragon	Primeval Fey	Fey	Skirmisher	Yes	No	Yes
21	Champion of Pestilence	Apocalypse Dragoons	Undead	Artillery	No	No	No
21	Lightning Archon	Elemental Archons	Elemental	Skirmisher	No	No	Yes
22	Primordial Thunderking	Primordial Destroyers	Giant	Elite	No	Yes	No
23	Champion of Death	Apocalypse Dragoons	Undead	Elite	Yes	No	Yes
23	Paramour Lich	Greater Liches	Undead	Artillery	No	No	No
24	Brynhildr War Queen	Valkyrie	Celestial	Elite	Yes	No	Yes
25	Ancient Brown Dragon	Brown Dragons	Dragon	Brute	Yes	No	Yes
25	Demidracolich	Greater Liches	Undead	Artillery	Yes	No	Yes
26	Primordial Ashcaller	Primordial Destroyers	Giant	Elite	No	Yes	No
27	Ancient Imperial Dragon	Imperial Dragons	Dragon	Elite	Yes	No	Yes
27	Drakopede	Vermindrakes	Monstrosity	Brute	Yes	No	Yes
27	Lich Lord	Greater Liches	Undead	Elite	No	No	No
28	Adamant Diligence	Seven Holy Virtues	Celestial	Artillery	No	No	No
28	Bloodbark Executioner	Lynchwoods	Plant	Elite	No	Yes	Yes
29	Living Spellstorm	Animus Arcana	Construct	Elite	Yes	No	Yes
30	Eternal Lich	Greater Liches	Undead	Brute	Yes	No	No
30	Primordial Worldbreaker	Primordial Destroyers	Giant	Elite	No	Yes	Yes

Abominable Hybrids

The phrase "a wizard did it" is often offered as explanation for the most bizarre happenings in a fantasy world, and never is that more accurate than with the abominable hybrids. A horrific blending of two or more animals, abominable hybrids bring the most fearsome offensive abilities of their respective components to bear. Each time a hybrid appears, it is but one of dozens of potential combinations. As a DM, you will have to construct a hybrid to fit the needs of your game using a convenient "build a beast" system. This system starts with the hybrid base stat block, and then you add two or more animal essences to it, modifying its abilities and other statistics. Benefits in each essence that are marked with "(Trait)" should be included in the final creature's stat block for reference. Those that don't have that designation are just changes to be made like increasing the hybrid's ability scores or hit points, and they don't need to be copied to its stat block.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an abominable hybrid with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check. Note that because hybrids are customizable, the lore information should be adjusted based on the hybrid the character is investigating.

The Abominable Hybrid

Has transmutation gone too far? The hybrids are the obvious result of a twisted and malicious mind, for who else would meld flesh into flesh and create such an arabesque of muscle and teeth? Once, while on an expedition in the company of Archmagister King, we encountered a pack of these hybrids. He uttered such a string of profanity as cannot be reprinted in good conscience, and I have never felt more grateful for his proclivity toward all-cleansing flame. These horrors should be scorched from the multiverse, never to be seen again.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Clerics, Range, Rangers, Wisdom (Targeting), Warlocks

Foils: AC (Low), Bards, Charisma (Targeting), Rogues, Wizards



ABOMINABLE HYBRID LORE	
DC	**INFORMATION**
17	Abominable hybrids are bespoke monstrosities constructed by ethically bankrupt magic-users. These creatures vary in power tremendously, becoming stronger as more animal essences are fused into them. They have little to no will of their own and are slaves to their creator's agenda.
21	Hybrids have a dispersed neurology, with their brains wired throughout their entire body. This means they are capable of resisting mental coercion through the same immune system that fights disease, making them highly resistant to mind-affecting spells and abilities. They are formidable melee combatants lacking in ranged options.
25	The party learns the hybrid's list of animal essences, including two of its traits and abilities that are most impactful. If the party is researching hybrids in general rather than a specific one, they instead learn the full details of one animal essence of their choice.

TACTICS

Hybrids get more complex as you add more animal essences to them, so we'll first provide a generic tactical plan for all hybrids and then offer specific advice for each animal essence. Hybrids are melee bruisers with a lot of hit points and comparatively low AC. They can use their Brawn over Brains trait to make Constitution saving throws in place of Intelligence or Charisma, making them strong against effects that force those saving throws. Hybrids should try to spend as much time as possible in melee and get up close to ranged attackers to prevent them exploiting the hybrid's lack of long-range abilities. You want to include at minimum two animal essences with every hybrid you build, both to be true to the namesake and because the hybrid's Multiattack is limited to taking each attack option no more than twice. Many of the animal essence options add only one attack and one recharging ability, so while that ability is recharging your hybrid will be fighting at less than full strength.

Essence of octopus is one of two options for hybrids that are at home in the water, providing the Underwater Camouflage trait for effective ambushes, Water Breathing, and a swim speed. The octopus essence excels at grappling a single target, spreading its Ink Cloud so it can Dash as a bonus action, then repeatedly attacking the grappled creature.

The other underwater option is essence of shark, which likewise adds a swim speed and Water Breathing. The shark essence is all about raw damage, with its powerful Bite attack and Blood Frenzy trait that grants advantage on attack rolls against creatures that don't have all their hit points. It's a simple essence—just get the hybrid in melee and chomp on the characters wearing the least armor.

Adding the essence of spider gives a lot of new traits and changes to the hybrid's stats that make it an adept ambusher on land, particularly in caverns and dungeons where it can benefit from its Spider Climb trait. Including some webs in the area helps the hybrid leverage its Web Sense and Web Walker traits for extra advantage. In combat, a hybrid with essence of spider can use its Web ability to restrain a creature from a distance, locking down ranged attackers or spellcasters while it engages the rest of the party. Its Sting can be used to great effect against creatures that are low on hit points—anyone it reduces to 0 hit points is paralyzed until the poison is cured.

The essence of python provides a climb speed and blindsight, allowing the hybrid to function in heavily obscured areas like dense fog or magical darkness. The Constrict action is a dangerous grapple attack best paired with another ability like the shark's Bite or spider's Sting. The Swallow Whole attack can take a character out of the fight temporarily and is great when used against some rogues and spellcasters who may struggle to do enough damage to free themselves.

Essence of raptor is the airborne option, bringing a fly speed and a powerful area-of-effect ability in Wing Attack, which can easily knock entire parties prone. With advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks, this essence also excels against any characters that rely on being hidden.

Lastly, essence of turtle gives a strong defensive boost to the hybrid. With the Withdraw action, the hybrid becomes more of a soldier-type monster, difficult to hit and hurt.

Easier Tactics – Adjusting the tactics for brute monsters is always tricky, because they don't have a lot of abilities to tweak. Follow the general advice for easier encounters: spread damage out among the party, wait a round or two before using limited-use abilities, and provoke a few opportunity attacks while moving around. You can also give the party an easier time by putting the hybrid in a large, wide-open area where its relatively slow speed gives the party a chance to pick it apart with ranged attacks.

Harder Tactics – Ambushes are a great way to start a fight, and with both the essence of spider and octopus providing advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, it's easy to make a hybrid with a talent for concealing itself. Most essence options also add a way for the hybrid to grapple a creature, and since the hybrids are Huge in size, they can move a Medium creature they are grappling without being slowed down. Combine that with swim, fly, or climb speeds and a hybrid can easily split the party by pulling one character into a hard-to-reach spot before tearing into them.

PLOT HOOKS

Cavernous Sabotage. An octopus-spider-python hybrid lurks in a cavern tunnel that runs between two cities. This tunnel, though never fully safe, is frequently relied on by merchants and traders. This hybrid had to be created by someone, and powerful wizards in both cities accuse each other of creating it to sabotage trade or even start a war between the cities.

Lake Lurkers. Two shark-raptor hybrids have taken up residence in a large lake and are hunting both the fish and the fishermen nearby. This lake is an important source of food for a nearby community, and unless something is done, famine is inevitable.

Undercover Monsters. An evil wizard is creating and teleporting turtle-shark-spider hybrids into different areas of a large city. These cunning beasts sequester themselves in sewers and abandoned buildings, waiting for the signal to begin their rampage. The only clue to the origin of the hybrids is a peculiar symbol branded on their backs.

TREASURE

The same techniques used to create the hybrids can be used to brew highly concentrated potions called *elixirs of animalia*. These potions channel the essence of a particular animal to enhance the drinker's abilities, according to the Elixir of Animalia table. Different elixirs can be combined, conferring all the listed effects when consumed. The potion's effects last for 1 hour.

At your discretion, there may be a significant cost to create these potions. Their creation is an evil act, turning living animals into a consumable liquid in a painful process, and a party that embraces this path is sure to make new enemies. The cost might also be mental or physical, causing levels of exhaustion or even addiction and withdrawal symptoms. These potions are powerful and shouldn't be given to the party for free.

Elixir of Animalia

Potion, very rare

HYBRID ESSENCE	EFFECT
Octopus	You gain a swim speed equal to your speed and you can breathe underwater. You gain advantage on all Intelligence ability checks and saving throws, and you can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Spider	You gain a climb speed equal to your speed and can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check or use your hands. You can make a Bite attack on each of your turns as a bonus action, attacking as though using a finesse weapon you are proficient in that deals 27 (6d8) poison damage on a hit.
Python	Creatures grappled by you take 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage at the start of each their turns and can't breathe while you're grappling them. You can only grapple one creature at a time.
Raptor	You gain a fly speed equal to your speed, and, while flying, your movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.
Shark	You gain advantage on attack rolls against creatures that don't have all their hit points.
Turtle	You gain a +5 bonus to AC.

ECOLOGY

As magically created beings that are subservient to their originator, most hybrids don't have a true ecology. The exceptions are those who have outlived their masters and wander the world, struggling to find a place for themselves. They possess a crude intellect more geared toward problem solving than consciousness; given time and kindness, they may be trained and perhaps even befriended. But hybrids are always feared by the uninformed, and any that are loose in the world make their lairs far away from civilization. Each one has a few quirks related to its original purpose, perhaps collecting spell scrolls or hunting down anyone with a resemblance to a famous wizard.

HYBRID BASE

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 95 (10d12 + 30)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +6
Skills Perception +4
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages —
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

TRAITS

Brawn over Brains (Trait). When the hybrid attempts an Intelligence or Charisma saving throw, it may instead attempt a Constitution saving throw.

Deadly Amalgamation. For every animal essence that is a part of the hybrid, its Challenge Rating increases by 2.

Hybrid Empowerment. For every two animal essences that are a part of the hybrid, its proficiency bonus increases by 1, and it gains proficiency in a single saving throw of your choice.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hybrid makes a single attack with each of its attacks (if available). The hybrid can forgo making two of these attacks to instead take one other action.

ESSENCE OF OCTOPUS

BENEFITS

Cunning of the Depths. The hybrid has a +2 bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Wisdom.

Increased Fortitude. The hybrid has five additional Hit Dice, and its hit point maximum is increased by 32 plus its Constitution modifier, multiplied by 5.

Octopus Biology. The hybrid has a swim speed equal to its speed, it has proficiency in Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks, and it has the Ink Cloud and Tentacles actions.

Underwater Camouflage (Trait). The hybrid has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks while underwater.

Water Breathing (Trait). The hybrid can breathe underwater.

ACTIONS

Ink Cloud (1/Short or Long Rest). A 40-foot-radius cloud of ink extends all around the hybrid if it is underwater. The area is heavily obscured for 1 minute, although a significant current can disperse the ink. After releasing the ink, the hybrid can use the Dash action as a bonus action.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +(Strength modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* (3d6 + Strength modifier) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC [10 + Strength modifier + proficiency bonus]). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the hybrid can't use its tentacles on another target.

ESSENCE OF SPIDER

BENEFITS

Guile of the Shadows. The hybrid has a +4 bonus to Dexterity and Wisdom.

Increased Fortitude. The hybrid has five additional Hit Dice, and its hit point maximum is increased by 32 plus its Constitution modifier, multiplied by 5.

Spider Biology. The hybrid has a climb speed equal to its speed, it has proficiency in Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks, and it has the Sting and Web actions.

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

Web Sense (Trait). While in contact with a web, the spider knows the exact location of any other creatures in contact with the same web.

Web Walker (Trait). The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +(Strength or Dexterity modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* (2d10 + Strength or Dexterity modifier) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC (8 + Constitution modifier + proficiency bonus) Constitution saving throw or take 27 (6d8) poison damage, or half as much on a success. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +(Dexterity modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, range 60/120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by the webbing. As an action, the restrained target can attempt a DC (8 + Strength modifier + proficiency bonus) Strength ability check, freeing itself on a success. The webbing is an object that be attack and destroyed (AC 13; hp 25; vulnerability to fire damage).

ESSENCE OF PYTHON

BENEFITS

Endurance of the Jungle. The hybrid has a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution.

Increased Fortitude. The hybrid has five additional Hit Dice, and its hit point maximum is increased by 32 plus its Constitution modifier, multiplied by 5.

Python Biology. The hybrid has a climb speed equal to its speed, it has blindsight up to 20 feet, and it has the Constrict and Swallow Whole actions.

ACTIONS

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +(Strength modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* (4d12 + Strength modifier) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC [8 + Strength modifier + proficiency bonus]). Until this grapple ends the target is restrained, the target can't breathe, and the hybrid can't constrict another target.

Swallow Whole. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +(Strength modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, reach 15 ft., one Large or smaller incapacitated creature. *Hit:* The hybrid swallows the target. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the hybrid, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the hybrid's turns.

If the hybrid takes 30 damage or more in a single turn from a creature inside it, the hybrid must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or regurgitate all swallowed creatures which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the hybrid. If the hybrid dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

ESSENCE OF RAPTOR

BENEFITS

Raptor Biology. The hybrid has a fly speed equal to its speed.

Grace of the Skies. The hybrid has a +4 bonus to Dexterity and Wisdom.

Keen Sight (Trait). The hybrid has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Increased Fortitude. The hybrid has five additional Hit Dice, and its hit point maximum is increased by 32 plus its Constitution modifier, multiplied by 5.

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +(Dexterity modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (3d8 + Dexterity modifier) slashing damage.

Wing Attack. The hybrid beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the hybrid must succeed on a DC (8 + Dexterity modifier + proficiency bonus) Dexterity saving throw or take (4d10 + Dexterity modifier) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

ESSENCE OF SHARK

BENEFITS

Blood Frenzy (Trait). The hybrid has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Increased Fortitude. The hybrid has five additional Hit Dice, and its hit point maximum is increased by 32 plus its Constitution modifier, multiplied by 5.

Might of the Sea. The hybrid has a +4 bonus Strength and Constitution.

Shark Biology. The hybrid has a swim speed equal to its speed, and has the Bite action.

Water Breathing (Trait). The hybrid can breathe underwater.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +(Strength modifier + proficiency bonus) to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (4d10 + Strength modifier) piercing damage, and the hybrid regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt (rounded down).

ESSENCE OF TURTLE

BENEFITS

Endurance of the Earth. The hybrid has a +2 bonus to Strength, Constitution, and Wisdom.

Increased Fortitude. The hybrid has five additional Hit Dice, and its hit point maximum is increased by 32 plus its Constitution modifier, multiplied by 5.

Turtle Biology. The hybrid has a +5 bonus to its natural AC.

ACTIONS

Withdraw. The hybrid takes the Dodge action and is immune to critical hits for as long as it benefits from the Dodge action.

OCTOSHARK

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 210 (20d12 + 80)
Speed 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +7
Skills Perception +6, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages—
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Blood Frenzy. The hybrid has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Brawn over Brains. When the hybrid attempts an Intelligence or Charisma saving throw, it may instead attempt a Constitution saving throw.

Underwater Camouflage. The hybrid has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks while underwater.

Water Breathing. The hybrid can breathe underwater.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hybrid makes a single attack with each of its attacks (if available). The hybrid can forgo making two of these attacks to instead take one other action.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage and the hybrid regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt (rounded down).

Ink Cloud (1/Short or Long Rest). A 40-foot-radius cloud of ink extends all around the hybrid if it is underwater. The area is heavily obscured for 1 minute, although a significant current can disperse the ink. After releasing the ink, the hybrid can use the Dash action as a bonus action.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit*: 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the hybrid can't use its Tentacles on another target.

SHARPYTHORAPSPIDOPUSTLE

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 340 (40d12 + 80)
Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	20 (+5)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +14, Dex +12, Con +12, Wis+11, Cha +3
Skills Perception +11, Stealth +12
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages —
Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

TRAITS

Blood Frenzy. The hybrid has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Brawn over Brains. When the hybrid attempts an Intelligence or Charisma saving throw, it may instead attempt a Constitution saving throw.

Keen Sight. The hybrid has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Underwater Camouflage. The hybrid has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks while underwater.

Water Breathing. The hybrid can breathe underwater.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hybrid makes a single attack with each of its attacks (if available). The hybrid can forgo making two of these attacks to instead take one other action.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 30 (4d10 +8) piercing damage and the hybrid regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt (rounded down).

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 34 (4d12 + 8) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 22). Until this grapple ends the target is restrained and can't breathe, and the hybrid can't constrict another target.

Ink Cloud (1/Short or Long Rest). A 40-foot-radius cloud of ink extends all around the hybrid if it is underwater. The area is heavily obscured for 1 minute, although a significant current can disperse the ink. After releasing the ink, the hybrid can use the Dash action as a bonus action.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 27 (6d8) poison damage, or half as much damage on a success. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Swallow Whole. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one Large or smaller incapacitated creature. *Hit:* The hybrid swallows the target. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the hybrid, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the hybrid's turns.

If the hybrid takes 30 damage or more in a single turn from a creature inside it, the hybrid must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the hybrid. If the hybrid dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) slashing damage.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit*: 18 (3d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 22). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the hybrid can't use its Tentacles on another target.

Web (Recharge 5–6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* + 12 to hit, range 60/120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by the webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 22 Strength (Athletics) ability check, freeing itself on a success. The webbing is an object that be attack and destroyed (AC 13; hp 25; vulnerability to fire damage).

Wing Attack. The hybrid beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the hybrid must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 28 (4d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

Withdraw. The hybrid takes the Dodge action and is immune to critical hits for as long as it benefits from the Dodge action.

Animus Arcana

Despite the assurances of wizards across the world, magic is not always as controlled and precise as it might appear. Sometimes things go horribly wrong, where arcane energies pool and coalesce into an ambulatory mass of magic. These so-called animated spells (or "animus arcana" to the learned mind) develop basic sentience and are driven by a deep, insatiable hunger for power. Whether created with intention or by some catastrophic accident, these artificial beings exhibit a wide range of magical properties in association with a school of magic. Unnatural in the extreme, it is obvious to even the most meat headed barbarian that an animus arcana is magic as it was never meant to be, twisted into a perpetual existence anathema to the world around it.

ANIMATED SPELLS

Most animated spells are not, strictly speaking, a spell given life. They are agglomerations of a school of magic, compressed and contorted into a being with alien sentience. Each has a personality reflective of the school of magic that composes it. For example, a living evocation is chaotic and destructive, while a living necromancy is malevolent and corrupting. Barely a creature, a living spell flows across the landscape, subjecting everything in its path to potent magic according to its own mysterious whims.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about animated spells with an Intelligence (Arcana) ability check.

ANIMATED SPELLS LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Sometimes magic gathers in a solid form, becoming an animated spell. These are each tied to a school of magic and have potent powers based on that type of arcana. While their effects vary greatly, each unleashes powerful magical effects similar to spells from that school.
20	Each animated spell is immune to spells and magical effects associated with its school of origin. Additionally, the living abjuration is entirely immune to spells. Each living spell channels effects associated with its parent school, but these are not cast the ways spells are, and can't be stopped by a *counterspell*.
24	Animated spells are like elementals, they are vulnerable to spells like *banishment* which require a strong force of personality to resist. They are also not especially durable, and a concentrated first strike can destroy the fragile bonds that hold them together.

The Animated Spells

The existence of animated spells has given me pause. Are they a natural reaction to the misuse of magic? Or perhaps the inevitable outcome of its use? At the very least we should rethink the way we spellcasters approach magic, for these creatures are too dangerous to not consider when practicing our arts. While not much for conversation, animated spells possess behavior and personalities befitting of the schools they hail from, and even some spellcasters who favor those schools. When Archmagister King encountered a living evocation, the similarities between their personalities was uncanny. Albeit in a very explosive and maniacal symmetry.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Clerics, Magic (Protection from), Mobility (High), Monks, Paladins

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Melee, Spells (Limited Variety), Warlocks

TACTICS

Every animated spell has the same three traits. Spellform allows the living spell to move through creatures and objects, and it inflicts an effect upon moving through a creature's space. This is an important part of the living spell's combat tactics and it should take a few opportunity attacks to inflict this ability on as many characters as possible. Immutable Form and Magic Immunity are simple traits, but they are important to remember. Each time a character casts a spell targeting a living spell, ask the player what school of magic the spell is from.

Each animated spell has a few unique abilities themed around its school. Most have one ability that it can use repeatedly, and another more powerful effect that, if successful, kills the animated spell when used. The latter effect should be saved until a few rounds into the fight, after the animated spell has lost more than half of its hit points. Several animate spells pose little threat in isolation and require allies to make for a challenging encounter. Pair animate spells with other constructs or creatures resistant to magic for best results.



TALIEN'S NOTES

Unregulated and unrestricted use of magic is a grave threat both philosophically and practically. I have not yet identified an exhaustive and comprehensive list of situations which may give rise to an animated spell, but there are some certainties. First, sorcerers are more likely to create them. This is not prejudice, it is fact. Second, magic that is long-suppressed by an *antimagic field* may become animated spells when that *antimagic field* is removed. Third and lastly, Shana Troublefoot leaves these in her wake like my cat leaves traces of its fur everywhere. It is academically fascinating and personally incredibly frustrating. And dangerous.

Easier Tactics — Don't use the ability that causes the spell to die or use it immediately. Both approaches make them easier to deal with. Don't have the creature move into more than a single character's space at a time, allowing the party a chance to understand and mitigate the effect before subjecting themselves further.

Harder Tactics — Try to have the animated spells use their self-killing abilities only when they are nearly dead and move them around as much as possible to trigger their Spellform trait. The spell's inherent cunning should let them pick targets vulnerable to its effects and may be paired with creatures able to quickly capitalize on the results of the spell's attacks.

PLOT HOOKS

AN EXCELLENT DAY FOR SCIENCE! A gnome wizard has lived up to the unfortunate stereotype of creating magical mayhem, simultaneously creating one of each type of animated spell. Even more unfortunately, the gnome had no plan to contain the spells once created, which quickly escaped his tower and are loose upon the countryside.

Death Marches. A powerful necromancer has shackled five living necromancies to her service, using them as powerful support forces for her undead army. Her strategy of wight foot soldiers supported by the animated spells has proven to be nearly unstoppable, titled the "death march" by those who have faced it in battle.

Magical Mayhem. Something is dreadfully wrong with the fabric of magic. Whenever a high-level spell is cast, an animated spell is created alongside the effect. This has already caused no small amount of chaos, and inspired a blanket ban on high level spellcasting until a solution can be discovered.

TREASURE

Animated spells are composed of enduring magical energy, shapeless and malformed by its existence. While "naturally" spawned animate spells are hostile to all life, if one can carve off a piece of a living one, they will find it can grow into a new animus arcana of the same type. Carving off a slice takes delicate precision, requiring a successful melee weapon attack against an animus arcana with a magical weapon that deals slashing damage, along with a DC 22 Wisdom (Medicine) check to do so with surgical precision. On a success, the still living piece can be stored inside a container that is designed to suppress its Spellform feature. If nurtured with magic from its associated school, the "infant" animus arcana will grow to full size within a period of one year, completely loyal and subservient to its parent. These "tame" animate spells are highly prized and are a testament to the magical skill and ingenuity of their masters.

ECOLOGY

Animate spells lack the intellect to have long-term goals and have no metabolism to sustain, so they spend most of their time dormant. Occasionally, for reasons none can determine, they will activate their abilities a few times before returning to a quiescent state. They are ruthlessly hostile toward living creatures, from the most powerful dragon to the tiniest beast, and have no feelings of fear or doubt. They will recklessly charge creatures that could easily destroy them, and as such, most animate spells are short lived unless they manifest in a sparsely populated area. These creatures can appear wherever powerful magic is being cast in high concentrations, though they have been known to form in areas of epically powerful or ancient magic as well. There is a rare and ancient spell that is known to summon animate spells, but such magic has been lost to time.

New Spell – Animate Magic

This spell is a class spell for sorcerers and wizards

Animate Magic

9th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 60 ft.
Components: V, S
Duration: 8 hours

A magical effect is transformed into a being of living magic, an animate spell. Choose a spell effect of 6th level or higher within range. That spell ends, and an animate spell is formed in a space of your choice within range of the spell. The animate spell is of a school according to the effect you targeted. For example, if you targeted an evocation spell with this spell, you would create a living evocation. You cannot command the animate spell, which is an independent creature beyond your control, though it is initially friendly to you and your allies.

LIVING ABJURATION

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12 + 72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Resistances force
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. When the spell moves into a creature for the first time on a turn or a creature ends its turn within the spell's space, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the creature's material form is banished to the astral void. While banished in this way, the creature's speed is 0, and it is incapacitated. At the start of each of its turns, the creature can attempt a DC 18 Charisma saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spell makes two dispelling strikes.

Dispelling Strike. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) force damage and one spell of 5th level or lower affecting the target immediately ends

Magical Shield. The spell protects a single creature other than itself that it is aware of within 60 ft. with a magical shield. The creature gains 50 temporary hit points from the shield, and while it has temporary hit points gained in this manner, it cannot be critically hit and is immune to the stunned and unconscious conditions.

LIVING CONJURATION

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. When the spell moves into a creature's space for the first time on a turn or a creature ends its turn within the spell's space, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the creature is teleported to any other space within 120 ft (spell's choice). If the creature appears in a space occupied by an object or creature, it takes 4d6 force damage and is shunted to the nearest unoccupied space.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the conjuration school.

ACTIONS

Arcane Strike. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) force damage.

Conjure. The spell conjures a cloud of spinning harmful materials (such as forks, nails, or bullets) in a 5 ft. cube within 60 ft. Everything in that cube must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 36 (8d8) bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (spell's choice), or half as much on a success.

Summon Creature. The spell dies, and in its place a creature with a CR of 10 or lower appears, which has the same statistics of an average member of its species. The creature has an overwhelming hatred for the enemies of the spell and cannot be compelled to act in a manner that is not hostile to the spell's enemies.

LIVING DIVINATION

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. A creature sharing a space with the spell has disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks. Additionally, when a creature within the spell's space rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll on their turn, their turn immediately ends.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the divination school.

ACTIONS

Arcane Strike. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) force damage.

Curse of Failure. The spell dies, condemning a single creature within 60 ft. with a dread curse. When the cursed creature would roll a d20, it instead rolls a d12.

Prophesize. The spell foretells the fate of creature it is aware of within 60 ft. Until the end of its turn, when the creature next attempts an ability check or makes an attack, the spell can force it to roll a natural 20 or a natural 1 instead of its normal result.

LIVING ENCHANTMENT

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. When the spell moves into a creature for the first time on a turn or a creature ends its turn within the spell's space, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the enchantment school.

ACTIONS

Arcane Strike. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) force damage.

Dominate. The spell establishes a telepathic link to a creature charmed by it within 120 ft. While the creature is charmed, the spell can use this telepathic link to issue commands to the creature (no action required), which it does its best to obey. The spell can specify a simple and general course of action, such as attack that creature, run over there, or fetch that object. If the creature doesn't receive directives from the spell, it defends and preserves itself to the best of its ability. At the start of the spell's next turn, the telepathic link ends.

Enslave. The spell dies, casting the spell *geas* on each creature of its choice within 120 ft. (Spell save DC 18). The command given by this spell is always to serve the creator of the spell to the best of a target's ability. If the spell has no creator, it instead commands a target according to the DM's discretion.

LIVING EVOCATION

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder
Damage Immunities radiant, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. When the spell moves into a creature for the first time on a turn or a creature ends its turn within the spell's space, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be subjected to the elemental chaos within, determined by rolling a d6 and consulting the results below.

1. **Fire.** The creature takes 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.
2. **Acid.** The creature takes 28 (8d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.
3. **Lightning.** The creature takes 28 (8d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.
4. **Poison.** The creature takes 28 (8d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.
5. **Cold.** The creature takes 28 (8d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.
6. **Thunder.** The creature takes 28 (8d6) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the evocation school.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spell makes two chaos blast attacks.

Chaos Blast. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit*: 17 (3d8 + 4) acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder damage (spell's choice).

Detonation. The spell explodes, killing itself and generating an explosion in a 100 ft. radius sphere centered on itself. Everything in the sphere must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 70 (20d6) force damage, or half as much on a success.

LIVING NECROMANCY

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. When the spell moves into a creature for the first time on a turn or a creature ends its turn within the spell's space, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 33 (6d10) necrotic damage, or half as much on a success.

Additionally, living creature's in the spell's area cannot regain hit points.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the necromancy school.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spell makes two death touch attacks.

Death Touch. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 25 (6d8+4) necrotic damage.

Exterminate. One living creature the spell is aware of within 5 ft. of it must attempt a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking necrotic damage equal to its hit point maximum on a failed saving throw or half as much on a success. If the creature fails the saving throw by 10 or more, it dies instantly. The spell then dies.

LIVING SPELLSTORM

A maelstrom of sentient magical chaos, the living spellstorm unleashes apocalyptic magic of staggering proportions. Formed from titanic magical conflicts, a spellstorm has no regard for the concerns of the material, raging against its own existence and the world around it. A typical living spellstorm is a swirling cloud of magic energy, thundering across the landscape while emitting prismatic magical radiation. Generations of magical scholars have attempted to explain the nature of the living spellstorms. Bards theorize the existence of a spellstorm comes from poorly performed magic on an epidemic scale. Clerics believe they are messengers of the gods, sent to punish magic users for their hubris. Druids postulate that nature created these animus arcana to restore balance to an increasingly unnatural world. Sorcerers simply claim that it is the inherent chaos in all magic, a freak accident that cannot be understood. Wizards have no prevailing theory, instead discrediting competing perspectives and arguing endlessly over who is the closest to the truth.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a living spellstorm with an Intelligence (Arcana) ability check.

LIVING SPELLSTORM LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Living spellstorms do incredible amounts of damage, unleashing magical meteors, devastating lighting, and literal tornadoes. Find cover immediately to avoid the worst of it, but don't expect that to save you.
23	A spellstorm can disrupt nearby spellcasting that is not performed skillfully enough. Its legendary nature allows for a torrential barrage of spells and attacks, all of which are magical in nature. These effects are extremely difficult to resist or dodge, and all but the most powerful defensive magic will be dispelled by the animus.
30	Never pick a fight with a spellstorm until you have done everything in your power to gain an advantage. Out healing its damage is nearly impossible, the best you can do is keep on your feet and pour on the damage as quickly as possible. Flight is essential to victory, don't even bother trying if you cannot take to the skies.

LIVING TRANSMUTATION

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. When the spell moves into a creature for the first time on a turn or a creature ends its turn within the spell's space, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be forced to assume the form of a Small beast of the spell's choice.

The creature's physical characteristics are replaced by the statistics of the chosen beast and the creature gains a number of temporary hit points equal to the hit points of its new form. These temporary hit points can't be replaced by temporary hit points from another source. A creature reverts to its normal form when it has no more temporary hit points or it dies. If the effect ends before then, the creature loses all its temporary hit points and reverts to its original form.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the transmutation school.

ACTIONS

Arcane Strike. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) force damage.

Petrify. The spell attempts to turn one flesh and blood creature it is aware of within 60 ft. into solid gold. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target is restrained for 1 minute as its flesh begins to harden. On a successful save, a creature isn't affected.

A creature restrained by this affect must make another DC 18 Constitution saving throw at the end of its next turn or be turned to gold, and permanently petrified. When a creature becomes petrified by this effect, the spell dies, and additional creatures cannot become petrified by this feature.

Touch of Sloth. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: Until the end of its next turn, the target is slowed. While slowed, it can use either an action or bonus action on its turn, but not both and cannot make more than a single attack during its turn.

The Living Spellstorm

Magic at its most dangerous and unpredictable, a living spellstorm serves as a reminder to all spellcasters that we are but children playing with an enigmatic force. What a wizard spends their life trying to master, a spellstorm achieves by merely existing. I consulted my other magical companions on the matter of living spellstorm, and each offered their unique perspective. Archmagister King simply dictated "I need it". I still don't know what for. Ionia lamented its existence, calling it "a wound in nature, festering with agony and pain". Elkus said he'd "consult the gods and get back to me". He never did, so I can only assume he learned nothing of value. Shana went off to try and find one and I haven't heard from her since, and Johan sent me a formal letter in response stating: "Legal counsel has advised me to not discuss this matter further". Clearly, I am the only one among my companions who respects the value of research!

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Elite
Favors: Bards, Flight, Range, Rogues, Warlocks
Foils: Clerics, Hit Points (Low), Melee, Monks, Paladins

LIVING ILLUSION

Huge construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12+72)
Speed 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8
Skills Perception +8
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Spellform. The spell's body is made of pure magic. It 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. The spell can assume the image of any creature or object of Huge size or smaller and is visually indistinguishable from an "ordinary" version of the image it has assumed.

Additionally, as a bonus action the spell can become invisible until it takes an action.

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

Magic Immunity. The spell is immune to spells and magical effects from the illusion school.

ACTIONS

Arcane Strike. *Melee Spell Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) force damage.

Microcosm. One flesh and blood creature the spell is aware of within 5 ft. of it must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or a fragment of illusion magic infects its mind; the spell then disappears, entering the target's mind, and the target's vision is replaced by a hallucinatory reality crafted by the spell. While infected in this manner, the creature can perceive only what the spell allows it to see, creating tactile, visual, and auditory hallucinations that are indistinguishable from reality.

The infection lasts for 24 hours, and at the end of each hour an infected creature can attempt a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success. When the effect ends, the spell dies.

Terrify. The spell momentarily assumes the shape of a horrifying visage, terrifying those that behold it. Each creature that can see the spell must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened in his manner, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from the spell by the shortest possible route on each of its turns. If a creature ends its turn in a location where it doesn't have line of sight to the spell, it can make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

TACTICS

The living spellstorm has numerous traits and abilities, making it far more formidable than its animate spell brethren. It retains the Spellform and Immutable Form traits, which work as expected, but also has the Tempest of Magic trait which creates a gigantic maelstrom around the living spellstorm and has a tremendous impact on the way the fight plays out. The spellstorm can cast spells using its Innate Spellcasting trait, which it should use to cast *meteor swarm* on approaching threats that are still a mile away. It is intelligent and should be ready to cast *planeshift* if it needs to make a swift getaway.

On its turns, the living spellstorm is best served by starting with Cyclone to deal heavy damage in a huge area, and then make two attacks with Arc Lightning against anyone who is restrained in the Cyclone. After that, use Empower and continue to make two attacks with Arc Lightning against restrained creatures for as long as the Cyclone persists. Use the spellstorm's legendary actions to cast a spell and then make one Lightning Strike. When casting spells, prioritize removing magical effects with *dispel magic* or moving the spellstorm with *dimension door* if it needs some breathing room.

Easier Tactics. Have the spellstorm cast *storm of vengeance* in place of *meteor swarm* and keep the fight low to the ground. This will prevent flying characters that get K.O.'d from falling and dying as easily and will allow party members to assist those who will inevitably get downed. Never have the spellstorm focus fire on a single target, spreading its attacks and effects out for maximum collateral damage. If things are still going badly, having the spellstorm focus on destroying terrain, structures, or even NPCs in the area out of rage and spite.

Harder Tactics. The living spellstorm can deal an absurd amount of damage by using Empower and then casting *meteor swarm.* With over 240 damage on a failed save, this can take out an entire party in a single shot if placed properly. So, do it. Use Cyclone to draw characters up into the spellstorm's body, subjecting them to its Spellform for extra damage. Remember the spellstorm is far more intelligent than its animate spell relatives. Cast *dispel magic* intelligently to remove protections and target vulnerable characters with a reasonable degree of cunning.

PLOT HOOKS

An Unconventional Power Source. A wonderous flying city is held aloft by siphoning energy from an imprisoned living spellstorm. This subjects the creature to agonizing pain, but the city is home to tens of thousands. If released, the spellstorm is unlikely to be merciful.

Weapon of Mass Destruction. A tyrannical cabal of wizards can summon a living spellstorm anywhere on the material plane. They use this threat of mass destruction to quickly subjugate many nations, utterly obliterating entire cities who dare defy their power.

Oops, Our Bad. A spell that was meant to bring about 100 years of bountiful harvest has instead created a living spellstorm. Panic ensues as thousands flee from the rampaging creature. Its creators believe the spellstorm can be used to fuel the original spell and still succeed in their mission. Someone must lure the angry spellstorm back to the ritual site and hold it there until the magic is complete.

TREASURE

When destroyed, a living spellstorm leaves behind a magically enhanced fog that lingers for 1 hour before losing potency. Known as the Incantium Mist, a humanoid creature that breaths this substance for a period of 10 minutes undergoes a mysterious transformation. Such a creature becomes a new type of humanoid, known as a spellborn. Spellborn creatures are a unique variation of their race, and gain the following traits, replacing their current racial traits when applicable.

Spellborn Traits

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores increase by 1, to a maximum of 21.

Age. Spellborn creatures do not age unless in areas of antimagic.

Languages. Spellborn creatures can commune with magic itself by "listening" to spells and magical effects. Magic communicates empathically, allowing spellborn to understand magics emotional state, such as whether it is angry, sad, or scared. The nature of magic as an entity is poorly understood, and spellborn typically are unwilling or unable to elaborate further.

Magic Resistance. Spellborn have advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects and take half damage from spells.

ECOLOGY

It is a blessing indeed that living spellstorms are unnatural and infrequent. Each appearance is accompanied by apocalyptic conflict, and many areas of the world remain scared by a spellstorm's presence centuries after its passing. Unlike other animus arcana, spellstorms are too unstable to exist for long periods of time. They never rest to recover from damage, tirelessly unleashing destruction until they finally burn themselves out. There are legends of spellstorms that choose a more docile existence in which they act as avatars of magic itself. These "benevolent" spellstorms hold great contempt for exploitative spellcasters but possess tremendous wisdom about the nature of magic and by extension, the multiverse itself.

LIVING SPELLSTORM

Gargantuan construct, unaligned

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 787 (45d20 + 315)
Speed 90 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	14 (+2)	24 (+7)	18 (+4)	30 (+10)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +16, Int +13, Wis +19
Skills Arcana +22, Religion +13, Perception +19
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 500 ft.
Languages —
Challenge 29 (135,000 XP)

TRAITS

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

Mythic Resistance. When the storm fails a saving throw, it can expend an unspent legendary action to succeed instead.

Spellform. The storm's body is made of pure magic. It can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 55 (10d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object. The first time a creature enters the storm's space on a turn or ends its turn within the storm's space, it must attempt a DC 27 Constitution saving throw, taking 33 (6d10) force damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

Tempest of Magic. The storm is tremendously large and it typically occupies a 50 ft. by 50 ft. cube that is 20 ft. tall. The storm generates a perpetual maelstrom of magical energy in a 100 ft. radius sphere that is heavily obscured for all creatures other than the storm. Whenever a creature in the area attempts to cast a spell, it must first succeed on a DC 21 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) check (caster's choice), or the spell fails and any resources used to cast the spell are wasted.

Innate Spellcasting. The storm's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (Spell save DC 27, +19 to hit on spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components or concentration to maintain a spell's effects for its duration. If the range of the storms' spells would be less than 100 ft., it is instead 100 ft.

At will: *dispel magic* (*as an 8th level spell*), *chain lightning* (*as an 8th level spell*), *control weather*, *dimension door*, *planeshift*
3/day: *meteor swarm*, *storm of vengeance*, *true polymorph*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The storm makes four arc lightning attacks at four different targets, or two arc lightning attacks at two different targets and takes one other action.

Arc Lightning. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 500 ft., one target. *Hit:* 32 (4d10 + 10) lightning damage and 22 (4d10) force damage.

Cyclone (Recharge 6). A whirling magical cyclone descends from the storm's body, up to 1 mile directly downward or until it encounters the ground. The cyclone is a 25 ft. radius cylinder and moves with the storm, lasting for 1 minute or until the storm becomes incapacitated. The cyclone sucks up any Huge or smaller objects that aren't secured to anything and that aren't worn or carried by anyone.

When a creature touches the area of the cyclone for the first time in a round, it must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or take 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage, becomes restrained for as long as they remain within the cyclone, and drawn 100 ft. upward. On a successful save a creature takes half damage and is thrown from the cyclone's area 100 ft. in a random direction.

Empower. The next time the storm would deal damage, it deals maximum damage. This benefit lasts until the end of the spellstorm's next turn or until it next deals damage, whichever comes first.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The storm 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. The storm regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). The storm casts a spell with the casting time of an action.

Lightning Strike. The storm makes an Arc Lightning attack.

Apocalypse Dragoons

Among the many faiths in the world, a common theme can be found: the end of the world. Every source of divine knowledge warns of the coming apocalypse, and while each tale is different, there are threads that unite them all. Every Armageddon has a harbinger. Inspired by these stories, a cabal of necromancers sought to forge their own heralds of destruction. With profane magic and cruel genius, the apocalypse dragoons were wrought; undead terrors possessing unholy power and an unceasing commitment to destruction. Famine, war, pestilence, and death are their colors, heralding the ruin each brings to mortal realms. Only the most powerful or bafflingly foolish of necromancers dare create these abominations. Only other undead are safe in the presence of the dragoons, whose intolerance for the ordered ways of the living puts even the most murderous psychopaths to shame. It is said that if all four dragoons ride together, the world of the living will fall. A circumstance that thankfully has not come to pass.

CHAMPION OF FAMINE

Starvation is a slow and gruesome killer. This fate befalls all those who cross the champion of famine; a centaur-like undead suffering from brutal emaciation and overflowing with malevolent power. Those that stand in its presence waste away, their bodies rapidly deprived of the nourishment. In a cruel twist, these creatures have no effect on plant life, leaving crops full and blooming as humanoids and animals starve, their emaciated bodies surrounded by food that cannot slake their hunger. In a matter of weeks a champion of famine can purge a city of all life, all without striking a blow or casting a spell.

The Champion of Famine

Though they are the least of the apocalypse dragoons, the champions of famine are not to be underestimated. They are difficult and obstinate foes who drain the strength from anyone nearby and can even sap the magical energy from ordinarily long-lasting spells. They must be put down quickly, for it is only a matter of days before their wide-reaching aura of starvation kills every living being in the entire region. Should you encounter one, you should also take down the necromancer responsible for its creation. It is likely the necromancer won't stop with just one.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Barbarians, Clerics, Constitution (High), Druids, Specific Spells (greater restoration)

Foils: Bards, Rogues, Spells (Concentration), Stealth, Wizards

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a champion of famine with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

CHAMPION OF FAMINE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Created through a vile necromantic ritual, champions of famine starve humanoid and beast alike in a huge area. They wield whips of bone that drain the life from all they touch.
21	The champion of famine doesn't kill its enemies directly; instead, its very presence saps the stamina of creatures nearby until everything is dead. Its whip deadens flesh and mind alike, weakening the ability to resist the champion's aura.
26	The longer a fight with a champion of famine lasts, the worse it gets. The exhaustion it instills is difficult to resist and harder to remove. Though the champion is hard to kill, it is somewhat frail and vulnerable to spells and abilities that attack its body, particularly those that inflict paralysis.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Fancifully termed "apocalypse dragoons" after an old human empire's cavalry, there is little that is whimsical about them. Before we delve into each individual variation, I must correct a false mythology that has sprung up. These are not true harbingers of the last days, and they are not gods. Such an idea is preposterous beyond explaining, but I will endeavor to do so. Apocalypse dragoons are undead, and they are created by powerful necromancers, typically liches, to accomplish a singular purpose. I have seen more than one of each type. Well, almost each one. Only one necromancer ever successfully created a champion of death, and I had to call in the only favor Elkus Dalgren has ever owed me to convince him to reduce it to dust and ash. He was kind enough to obliterate the necromancer as well.



TACTICS

The champion of famine's most threatening ability is its Aura of Starvation. Its attacks don't deal damage, instead imposing the debilitating effects of its Bringer of Strife feature, but that ability won't kill anyone by itself. The only way a champion of famine can take a party member out of the fight is by inflicting six levels of exhaustion, killing them instantly. This means the first few rounds are going to be mild, but characters who keep failing their saving throws against the Aura of Starvation (and don't get any exhaustion-removing help from their friends) will be dead by the third round.

Because the champion of famine must make each Great Whip attack against a different target, it should move as much as possible to be in and among the party, maximizing the number of characters in its reach. Prioritize targeting characters who are not afflicted with Bringer of Strife—ideally the whole party will be under that effect for the entirety of the fight, severely limiting the damage they can deal. On the first round, aim for paladins, rogues, and barbarians—anyone who can deal a lot of damage with melee attacks. The speed reduction and limit of one attack on their turns will curtail their offensive ability substantially.

Use Feast Upon Famine on any turn the champion of famine has fewer than 115 hit points, picking the closest character to feed on. Don't forget to use Uncanny Dodge once per round, particularly against critical hits, sneak attacks, or divine smites. Finally, save Wither for long-lasting spell effects that don't require concentration, such as *forcecage* or *foresight*, taking them out of the fight. Use Expand Aura on any turns during which the champion of famine can't get into melee range of more than one target.

Easier Tactics – Don't worry about making three Great Whip attacks each turn; it's okay if the champion of famine only attacks two characters or even just one. Move around a lot, potentially ending more than 30 feet away from some of the party, sparing them from Aura of Starvation. As a final tweak, consider using Wither or Uncanny Dodge sparsely.

Harder Tactics – Keep the champion of famine 300 feet away from the party and use Expand Aura every turn. It's not glamorous, but it will brutalize an unprepared party. For a less ruthless difficulty increase, try to dance the champion of famine around 30 feet away from the party to keep them in its aura, and rely on the Great Whip attacks to knock targets prone to prevent melee characters from engaging effectively.

PLOT HOOKS

Plague of Famine. The party finds town after town of emaciated corpses, all desperately clutching food. It seems they spent their last moments eating but still starved to death. In the distance, a skeletal centaur gallops away, leading the party toward some kind of trap.

Mistakes Were Made. A benevolent necromancer's ritual goes awry. Attempting to create a workforce of skeletal laborers to handle the farming needs of a major metropolis, the magic instead creates a champion of famine (or perhaps more than one) which is now threatening the survival of everyone the necromancer wished to help.

Gnawing Hunger. In an ancient dungeon deep below the earth, a champion of famine awakens. Its aura stretches through the earth to the land above. Cities are wiped out or evacuated, and the only way to solve this problem is to get through the dungeon and destroy the champion. Hopefully the party doesn't free it by mistake.

TREASURE

The party may find some or all the components needed to create a champion of famine in the lair of its summoner.

Creating a champion of famine requires a collection of clouded diamonds worth 10,000 gp, a jagged shard of onyx worth 5,000 gp, and the bones of a horse that died of desiccation. The summoner must cast *heroes' feast* in front of a starving humanoid, who must die of hunger while in the presence of the magical food. Immediately following the victim's death, the summoner must stab the onyx shard into the humanoid's forehead. The body's flesh necrotizes instantly and its bones merge with those of the horse. The food created by *heroes' feast* bursts into flames as the champion of famine is born. It obeys its summoner unquestioningly, except when such orders would conflict with its Herald of the Apocalypse trait. Creating a champion of famine is always an evil act.

ECOLOGY

A champion of famine has no purpose other than to spread starvation. It does not sleep, it does not eat, it does not stop. It rides across the land, lingering only long enough to make sure everyone and everything around it is dead. For these reasons a champion of famine does not typically survive long. Those that call one forth must make immediate use of its powers or risk losing what little control was had over the undead. While a champion of famine has never been observed communicating

CHAMPION OF FAMINE

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 231 (22d10 + 110)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	24 (+7)	21 (+5)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +13, Wis +9, Cha +13
Skills Insight +15, Perception +9, Religion +13
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, stunned, unconscious
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages understands all languages but cannot speak
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Aura of Starvation. When a flesh-and-blood creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the champion, it must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion. If a creature fails this saving throw by 5 or more, it instead gains two levels of exhaustion.

Bringer of Strife. The champion cannot deal damage; when it would deal damage it instead causes horrific (but nonlethal) pain. A creature that would have taken damage from the champion must succeed on a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 10 plus half the damage the champion would have dealt (rounded down). On a failure, the creature suffers the following effects until the end of its next turn.

- The creature's speed can be no more than 10 feet.
- The creature cannot maintain concentration.
- On its turn, the creature can take either an action or a bonus action, but not both.
- The creature cannot make more than one melee or ranged attack during its turn.

Feast Upon Famine. As a bonus action the champion can feed upon the starvation of a single creature it can see that has one or more levels of exhaustion. The creature reduces its levels of exhaustion by one, and the champion regains 40 hit points.

Herald of the Apocalypse. The champion cannot be compelled to act in a manner that prevents it from causing starvation and strife to living creatures. Additionally, its weapon attacks are magical, and it cannot be disarmed of its weapon.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The champion uses its Wither action (if available) and makes three attacks, each of which must be against a different target.

Expand Aura. The champion increases the radius of its Aura of Starvation to 300 feet.

Great Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d4 + 7) slashing damage and the target is knocked prone.

Wither (Recharge 5–6). The champion ends a single spell or magical effect within 120 feet of it.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker the champion can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

with others, it clearly understands all it hears. The creatures appear to take some pleasure in hearing the agonized moans and pleas of its victims. It will reveal its presence so that in their final moments its victims can behold the horror of what is responsible, extinguishing what little hope remains.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

Unlike some powerful creatures that only shape the area around their lair, a champion of famine cloaks everything around it in an aura of oppressive hunger which claws at the spirit and makes the gut ache. It creates the following effects within 10 miles of the champion.

- Flesh-and-blood creatures cannot gain nourishment from food or drink. Constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead are unaffected.
- When any creature in the area finishes a short or long rest, it instead gains no benefits from the rest and gains 1 level of exhaustion.

If the champion dies, the effects end immediately.

The Champion of War

Simple and direct, all the champion of war has in common with its bailiwick is bloodshed and rage. There are no tactics to be found here, no political agendas to advance through crude violence, and certainly no hope of an acquiescing surrender that puts a stop to the killing. Once summoned, champions of war trample across the battlefield, chasing down anyone and everything in their path. They target large cities and powerful factions which can rally armies in response. Then they attempt to lead multiple armies into each other's path before laying waste to all of them. While a champion of war is in the thick of a fight, it is unkillable. Only a moment of peace after a mortal blow is dealt can bring down this abomination.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Dexterity (High), Sorcerers, Spells (Damaging), Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Melee, Mobility (Low), Paladins

CHAMPION OF WAR

From a political office, war is organized and precise. It has purpose, strategy, and reason, whether justified or not. On the front lines, war is brutal and without mercy, an exercise in futility and waste. The champion of war exemplifies the latter, taking life in the most senseless manner with no hesitation. It is brutality on four hooves, striking with overwhelming force to better ensure a glorious, gory melee. The largest of the dragoons, a champion of war is a hulking undead bulging with necrotized muscle and adorned in rusty plate armor. In each of its hands is clutched a massive great axe that cleaves through living flesh like a hot knife through butter. Silent and merciless, the champion of war grants a swift death to any soldier it encounters on the battlefield.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a champion of war with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

CHAMPION OF WAR LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	A champion of war reigns supreme on the battlefield, charging from target to target with its mighty axe. With whirling blows it cleaves the flesh from everything around it, and it can shrug off even the most destructive blows, fighting until there is nothing left to kill.
22	There is little one can do to stop a champion of war from getting where it wants to go. It can even break down magical barriers, and it shrugs off almost every spell thrown its way. Perhaps its only weakness is that it makes no effort to dodge out of the way of large-scale effects, and it can be worn down by a prolonged barrage of arcane energy.
27	To destroy a champion of war, you must deal it lethal damage and then keep it from attacking for a few moments. While it has enemies to attack, it will remain functional, empowered by pure fury. A brief pause is all it takes, and the champion will perish.

TACTICS

A champion of war is a simple creature on the battlefield. Use Devastating Charge to break down barriers (this even destroys spells like *wall of fire* that don't block movement, as they are still magical obstacles) and if there aren't any barriers to destroy, move to within 10 feet of as many characters as possible and use Twin Cleave to deal tremendous damage. The champion's Javelin attack is only there if it can't get into melee range—its Great Axe is far more effective. Save Retaliate for big hits, but don't worry too much about being maximally efficient with it. The champion of war is not a calculating schemer.

The champion's Feast Upon War trait causes it to heal for half the damage dealt to it. Functionally this is identical to having resistance to that damage, but it applies after the damage is dealt, meaning if a hit reduces the champion to 0 hit points, that will cause its Undying Conflict

ability to activate, preventing the champion from regaining any hit points. Note that this does not apply to damage from spells, but it does include "additional damage" added to weapon attacks, such as Sneak Attack, Divine Smite, or bonus damage from a magical weapon.

When the champion is reduced to 0 hit points and Undying Conflict activates, all it cares about is attacking every round to prolong its unlife for as long as possible.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Devastating Charge or Twin Cleave at every opportunity and tweak the champion of war's Undying Conflict ability so it expires after 1 round. The final hurrah is thematically appropriate, but it will make the fight much easier if the champion collapses immediately afterward.

Harder Tactics – Hit and run is the name of the game. With a 60-foot speed and a 10-foot reach with its Great Axe, the champion of war can easily rush by the party, make its attacks, and then keep going. This gets even more brutal if you use Devastating Charge every round to let the champion move a total of 180 feet, making it almost impossible for melee characters to hit it.

PLOT HOOKS

Secret Weapons. War breaks out among once-peaceful allies, and both sides have been seen fielding a mysterious, armored centaur. This creature is a champion of war concealed by heavy armor, though no plate can hide the stench of death, and its summoner keeps a tight rein on it to prolong the battle as long as possible, switching sides as needed.

CHAMPION OF WAR

Huge undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 337 (25d12 + 175)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	24 (+7)	4 (-3)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Str +15, Con +13, Wis +10, Cha +13
Skills Athletics +21, Insight +12
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages understands all languages but cannot speak
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

TRAITS

Aura of Battlelust. The champion exudes an aura of savagery in a 60-foot radius. When a creature ends its turn in the area and did not make a weapon attack against another creature that turn, it takes 27 (6d8) necrotic damage.

Feast Upon War. After the champion takes damage from a weapon attack, it regains hit points equal to half the damage taken (rounded down).

Herald of the Apocalypse. The champion cannot be compelled to act in a manner that prevents it from causing war and bloodshed to living creatures. Additionally, its weapon attacks are magical, and it cannot be disarmed of its weapons.

Undying Conflict. When the champion is reduced to 0 hit points, it is not killed but instead enters an undying rage, granting it the following benefits.

- The champion can neither regain hit points nor die.
- The champion has advantage on weapon attack rolls
- If the champion makes a weapon attack and scores a hit, it instead scores a critical hit.
- The rage ends if the champion ends its turn without successfully hitting an enemy creature with a weapon attack that turn. When the rage ends, the champion dies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The champion uses its Devastating Charge and makes a weapon attack, or it makes two weapon attacks.

Devastating Charge. The champion moves up to double its speed in a straight line. The champion destroys magical barriers that would impede this movement as well as objects or structures of Gargantuan size or smaller not being worn or held. Creatures in the path of the champion must attempt a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw. A success moves a creature to the nearest unoccupied space within 10 feet out of the champion's path. On a failure, the creature takes 34 (6d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone.

Great Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (3d12 + 9) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it suffers a wound. A wounded creature loses 5 (1d10) hit points at the start of each of its turns. Each time the champion hits a wounded target with this attack, the damage dealt by the wound increases by 5 (1d10). Any creature can take an action to stanch the wound, successfully ending the effect with a successful DC 23 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check. The wound is also removed if the target receives magical healing.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft. or range 30/120 ft., *Hit:* 18 (2d8 + 9) piercing damage.

Twin Cleave (Recharge 5–6). The champion makes two Great Axe attacks against each creature of its choice within reach.

REACTIONS

Retaliate. When a creature within 10 ft. of the champion hits it with a weapon attack, it can make a single Great Axe attack against that creature. On a successful hit, the attack deals bonus damage equal to the damage the champion took from the attack.

Senseless Violence. A long war comes to an abrupt end when the armies of both sides are butchered and slaughtered. A skeletal centaur prowls the battlefield now, killing any who try to recover the bodies or equipment of the slain.

Unstoppable Forces. Two champions of war are created at the same time, in different places for different reasons. Linked by the foul magic that fuels them, they charge toward each other inexorably, destroying everything that gets in the way. What will happen when they meet?

TREASURE

The party may find some or all of the components needed for a champion of war in the lair of its summoner.

To summon a champion of war, a spellcaster must put at least three trained soldiers, all of whom must be humanoids, in an enclosed space no bigger than 20 feet in diameter. This arena must be ringed with purple sapphires worth a total of 44,000 gp. An axe is specially prepared by bathing it in the blood of a freshly slain warhorse, then it is placed in the middle of the enclosed space where *symbol* is cast upon it with the Pain effect. The glyph is activated, and the humanoids fight to the death while wracked with terrible pain. The ritual prolongs the effects of *symbol* until only one humanoid is left alive, at which point the remaining fighter is compelled to turn the axe against itself, hacking its own body into bloody chunks. When the last fighter is dead, the bones from the bodies rip out of the flesh and merge together, forming a champion of war. It obeys its summoner unquestioningly, except when such orders would conflict with its Herald of the Apocalypse trait. Creating a champion of war is always an evil act.

The Champion of Pestilence

Plague incarnate, a motile pox, a wandering virulence, and so much worse. Champions of pestilence inflict an awful sickness called the unraveller. It deadens the arms, weakens the body, and clouds the mind. But it doesn't kill, not by itself. The champion of pestilence prolongs the suffering of every living being around it, rejoicing in their misery and helplessness. They are cruel and evil and always the herald of something much worse. Their presence precedes invasion, typically by an undead horde, and there is no more efficacious way of breaking a well-entrenched army.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Artillery

Favors: Bards, Clerics, Constitution (High), Specific Spells (counterspell), Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Melee, Monks, Poison (Protection from), Rogues

ECOLOGY

True to its name, a champion of war cares only for one thing: waging war. It has no interest in beasts or natural predators, only sentient beings who commit organized violence. It does not eat or sleep, riding all through the night until it finds more victims. While it is a brutal enemy, a champion of war is not cruel. It never leaves its victims to suffer, finishing them off with ruthless efficiency. Those that give a champion of war a good fight will earn the creature's begrudging respect. Living creatures that share in its psychotic obsession with physical violence may even ally with a champion of war for a time, so long as they share in its unceasing commitment to battle. The only emotions these undead have been known to demonstrate is fury on the battlefield, and a peculiar peaceful satisfaction at the eerie silence that follows a great conflict.

CHAMPION OF PESTILENCE

Bringer of plague, scourge of life, rotter of flesh. A champion of pestilence, at least by itself, is the least directly destructive of the apocalypse dragoons. Its presence foments and incites diseases to spread and linger, making them almost impossible to cure. In combat, the champion inflicts the unraveller, a magical disease that turns the mightiest warrior into a mewling babe. Appearing as a rotting undead centaur leaking putrid contagion, these foul creatures contaminate everything they come into contact with. A champion of pestilence exists to prove the fragility of living flesh. Rot and infection are its evidence, dismantling mighty dragon and humble commoner alike.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a champion of pestilence with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

CHAMPION OF PESTILENCE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	A champion of pestilence's presence alone is enough to render even the most resilient individuals susceptible to disease and plague. It also makes those who become infected tremendously difficult to treat, blocking even magical attempts that would ordinarily remove the problem in a heartbeat.
23	The greatest danger from a champion of pestilence is the unraveller, a magical disease that spreads to everyone within close proximity. Once someone is infected, removing the disease is a tremendous challenge, and it causes its victims to become vulnerable to attacks, dampens both physical and magical strength, and makes it impossible to resist even the simplest effects.
28	Like many of the apocalypse dragoons, a champion of pestilence is not particularly agile. It is also reliant on spells for much of its combat effectiveness, and a friendly wizard with *counterspell* is invaluable. While *antimagic field* may seem a good choice, the champion is unaffected by non-enchanted weapons and other mundane attacks, and the spell helps the champion more than it hinders it.

TACTICS

The champion of pestilence's primary goal is to keep the maximum number of characters within 120 feet, within range of its Aura of Contagion. Most of its tactical choices are in spell selection, and it's best to start with the high-level spells first. Start by using Mass Infection to cast *blight* on the entire party. On subsequent rounds, cast *cloudkill* if the party is clustered together or *feeblemind* if they are spread out. While the champion is concentrating on a spell, use *ray of sickness* to deal damage and *infestation* or *poison spray* rather than the champion's Plague Touch ability. Don't forget to increase the damage from *ray of sickness* to 6d8 because it's cast at 5th level and use the 17th-level damage numbers for the cantrips, 4d6 and 4d12 respectively.

Beyond that, use *dispel magic* if an ongoing spell effect is causing problems, and don't forget to the give the champion its 20 temporary hit points each time someone fails a saving throw against its spells or abilities. Temporary hit points don't stack, so this is a refreshing buffer against damage rather than a snowballing stockpile.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Multiattack; just cast one spell per turn. Use Mass Infection only once. If needed, cast lower-level spells and avoid using *blight* or *cloudkill*.

Harder Tactics – Use Mass Infection to cast *feeblemind* on the first round targeting the whole party. That is almost guaranteed to take a few of them out of commission, then you can focus your attacks on whoever is left. On subsequent turns, cast *confusion* on someone who resisted *feeblemind* and then pick the most damaging spell available. Don't cast cantrips with Multiattack; instead, use Plague Touch on the same character over and over, prioritizing anyone who can cure diseases—while those characters are afflicted with the unraveller, they can't succeed on the Wisdom (Medicine) ability check needed to remove the disease from anyone, including themselves.

PLOT HOOKS

Doom Plague. An entire order of paladins comes down with a deadly plague that resists all attempts at a cure. Soon it spreads to a monastery of monks and a circle of powerful druids. Someone is making a point by targeting those who consider themselves immune to earthly sickness.

CHAMPION OF PESTILENCE

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 352 (28d10 + 198)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	25 (+7)	19 (+4)	22 (+6)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Con +14, Int +11, Wis +13, Cha +15
Skills Arcana +11, Medicine +20, Perception +13, Religion +11
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, stunned, unconscious
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages understands all languages but cannot speak
Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

TRAITS

Aura of Contagion. At the start of each of the champion's turns, each flesh-and-blood creature within 120 feet of it must attempt a DC 23 Constitution saving throw. If a creature fails three saving throws against this feature, it contracts a magical disease called the unraveller. These failures need not be consecutive—keep track of a creature's accumulated failed saving throws. A creature's number of failed saving throws resets to zero when it finishes a short or long rest.

Creatures afflicted with the unraveller take double damage from all sources, deal half damage with weapon and spell attacks, and automatically fail saving throws and ability checks.

Feast Upon Pestilence. When a flesh-and-blood creature fails a saving throw against one of the champion's abilities or spells, the champion gains 20 temporary hit points. These temporary hit points last for 1 minute.

Herald of the Apocalypse. The champion cannot be compelled to act in a manner that prevents it from causing pestilence and disease to living creatures.

Noxious Poisons. When the champion would deal poison damage, it can choose to deal necrotic damage instead.

Spellcasting. The champion is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 23, +15 to hit with spell attacks). The champion can cast the following spells without the need for verbal or material components:

Cantrips (at will): *infestation*†, *poison spray*
4/day each (as a 5th-level spell): *confusion, contagion, dispel magic, ray of sickness*
3/day each (as a 7th-level spell): *cloudkill, feeblemind*
2/day each (as a 9th-level spell): *blight, maddening darkness*†.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The champion casts a spell and then casts two cantrips or casts a spell and makes an attack.

Mass Infection (Recharge 5–6). The champion casts a spell that targets a single creature. The range of the spell is increased to 300 feet and the champion may target any number of creatures of its choice within range.

Plague Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The creature must immediately attempt a DC 23 Constitution saving throw as though affected by the champion's Aura of Contagion ability.

† This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*.

Health Insurance. A deadly plague suddenly resurges after being nearly contained and wiped out. A champion of famine rides through the city, and sickness blossoms. Then, a hooded figure offers the cure…for a price.

Pandemic. Someone discovers a way to mass-produce champions of pestilence, and a half-dozen appear simultaneously. Each one is a traveling disaster, but if nothing is done about their creator there's no telling how soon another half-dozen will appear. Or another hundred.

TREASURE

The party might find some or all of the components needed to create a champion of pestilence in the lair of its summoner.

To conjure a champion of pestilence, a collection of impure emeralds worth 30,000 gp is crushed and powdered, then mixed with two dozen *potions of healing* in a cauldron worth 2,000 gp, along with the bones of a horse that died of an incurable disease. The caster must cast *clone* on itself, placing the still-gestating clone into the cauldron. After an incubation period that ranges from 8 hours to 120 days (at the DM's discretion), the cauldron bursts open as the champion of pestilence violently emerges. It obeys its summoner unquestioningly, except when such orders would conflict with its Herald of the Apocalypse trait. Creating a champion of pestilence is always an evil act.

ECOLOGY

There is no ecology for champions of pestilence—they are an unending fount of toxicity. They do not sleep, eat, or do anything other than search for what is healthy so they can make it foul. These undead are either deluded or insane, seeing their infections as a gift to be shared with all the living. When not under threat, they take on a bedside manner similar to that of a mute healer, but with no intention of curing the afflicted. Instead, the champion languishes in the creature's slow death, all the while keeping close tabs on its symptoms. Some believe that through this study, champions of pestilence seek to formulate the perfect plague; an incurable scourge that will obliterate all life. How the champions share their findings with each other is unknown, but each new champion appears to inherit the knowledge of diseases and plagues researched by its predecessors.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The area around a champion of pestilence is fraught with a noxious infection, which creates the following effects within 10 miles of the champion.

- Creatures in the area cannot be immune to disease. A creature that is immune to disease instead has advantage on saving throws against diseases.
- When a creature attempts to cure a disease by any means, it must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check as a part of the attempt (no action required), or the attempt fails.

If the champion dies, these effects end immediately.

CHAMPION OF DEATH

Death is the fate of all life, and the champion of death fate's instrument. These undead are the shepherd of souls, who usher the final curtain down and proclaim that the time has come for the flame of life to extinguish. It is a nearly unstoppable killer, wielding twin scythes that cleave armor, flesh, and spirit with equal ease. Taking the shape of a skeletal centaur wreathed in shadowy robes, the champion of death creates no sound with any of its movements, echoing the tranquil silence of the grave. Their blows inflict no pain, cutting the life force away from their targets with every stroke. Few ever see the blades of the champion of death as it cleaves their souls into the afterlife, a peaceful death soon to be shared with every living thing the champion can find.

The Champion of Death

The mere memory of this one sends shivers down my spine, like I'll never be warm again. A champion of death looks right into your soul and knows a hundred ways to rend it from your body. Possessed of incredible speed, it can strike so quickly it will separate your head from your shoulders before you realize it moved. A warding shell of antilife energies prevents living beings from getting close, and the champion wields its long-handled scythes with impunity. Elkus Dalgren is the only cleric I know who can stand up to undead of this magnitude, and even he was hesitant. Granted, his hesitation was because he had to find time between fending off a demonic incursion and founding another alcoholism support group, but all the same, one should not take these avatars of death lightly if one enjoys being alive.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Elite

Favors: Clerics, Fighters, Necrotic (Protection from), Range, Rangers, Reach

Foils: Bards, Constitution (Low), Hit Points (Low), Warlocks, Wizards

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a champion of death with an Intleligence (Relgion) ability check.

CHAMPION OF DEATH LORE

DC	INFORMATION
19	The pinnacle of the apocalypse dragoons, a champion of death is a mobile, aggressive melee combatant. It moves and attacks at lightning speed and knows the precise location of every living being in a 10-mile radius.
26	A champion of death can strike a creature dead with a single word, surpassing even *power word kill* in lethality. Furthermore, a barrier preventing any living being from getting within arm's length of the champion surrounds it. If dispelled, this barrier regenerates after a few moments.
30	A champion of death has few weaknesses, but fighting one is not totally hopeless. One should invest heavily in any effects that provide resistance or other protections against necrotic energies, and those who plan to enter melee combat should acquire a weapon with extended reach to strike from outside the champion's warding barrier.

TACTICS

Death is uncomplicated. The champion moves among its foes using its 10-foot reach and Antilife Shell trait to keep from provoking opportunity attacks while attacking with its Sickle. Target a frail character—like a wizard or rogue—with Death Sentence on the champion's second turn. After that, use its legendary actions for Shadow of Death when the champion needs to maneuver or avoid an obstacle, and otherwise make as many Sickle attacks as possible. When Death Sentence recharges, use it again. Note the champion's high Stealth. It can easily hide during combat or before battle to gain surprise, though it is unlikely to do so unless unsure of its victory.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Death Sentence more than once and avoid using the Shadow of Death legendary action. Consider having the champion of death spend its first turn in silent observance, allowing the party to attack it while it sizes them up. Keep attacks divided amongst multiple targets, as the champion does way too much damage for most characters to survive more than a couple hits.

Harder Tactics – Use Death Sentence on the first turn and use the champion's legendary action Aspect of Death every round to recharge the ability and use it again. Focus on characters with low Constitution scores—only once they are all dead should the champion of death engage in melee combat. Use Shadow of Death often to reposition the champion and surprise characters who think they are safely out of range.

PLOT HOOKS

Dragonslayer. A mighty and terrible red dragon is slain, ending its tyrannical reign. This seems a good thing at first, until an equally powerful gold dragon also dies. Every day another dragon perishes, and there must be a reason behind these killings.

Witness to Genocide. Every single inhabitant of a major city is killed overnight, except one. Who is the lone survivor? Is this person responsible for the deaths, or was the loner left alive for a reason?

Blades of Oblivion. A cursed scythe grants its wielder tremendous skill in battle but drives the wielder to seek the scythe's sibling weapon. When both are found and brought together, the wielder transforms into a champion of death.

TREASURE

The party might find some or all of the components needed to summon a champion of death in the lair of its summoner.

There is only one way to summon a champion of death. A powerful humanoid who has died and been brought back to life at least once must be placed on a guillotine built from the bones of a unicorn, with an adamantine blade worth 5,000 gp. A set of pearls worth 12,000 gp must be embedded in the skeleton of the live humanoid without killing the victim. Once prepared, the guillotine blade is dropped and *power word kill* must be cast simultaneously at the exact moment of the blade's impact.

Upon completion, a swirling cloud of inky blackness billows forth, the pearls melt into the humanoid's skeleton, and the guillotine structure reshapes to form the champion of death. Once summoned, it wields the adamantine blade from the guillotine that killed it, breaking it in half to form a pair of sickles with bone handles. The champion of death obeys its summoner unquestioningly, except when such orders would conflict with its Herald of the Apocalypse trait. Creating a champion of death is always an evil act.

ECOLOGY

The champion of death exists to end life in all its forms. Unlike the other apocalypse dragoons, it may go through periods of extended inactivity. It waits for an unseen signal before springing into action as a maelstrom of violence, leaving only corpses in its wake. These undead are notoriously difficult to control, possessing a cryptic and mysterious nature. Champions of death treat the act of taking life as a sacred act, giving their victims a moment to come to terms with their fate and prepare themselves. While any living thing that encounters a champion of death is sure to be slain, the creature rarely seeks out life with the tenacity of its fellow dragoons. They instead wait patiently, acting only when a set of mysterious criteria compel them to intervene. Those that seek to painlessly end their existence have been known to seek out champions of death, who

gladly and painlessly grant their wishes. The areas a champion of death visits become barren landscapes. Their very presence instantly slaughters lesser creatures in a colossal area, leaving behind hordes of zombies and other undead quick to capitalize on the sudden plethora of fresh corpses.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

A pall hangs over the area around a champion of death, and no sound echoes there. The following effects occur within 10 miles of the champion.

- Any living creature with 2 or fewer maximum Hit Dice in the area dies instantly. Humanoid creatures slain in this manner rise as zombies within 24 hours unless their bodies are destroyed or consecrated with holy water.
- The champion is aware of the exact location of every living thing within the area and living creatures cannot be hidden from the champion while within the area.

If the champion dies, these effects end immediately.

CHAMPION OF DEATH

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 375 (30d12 + 180)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	18 (+4)	23 (+6)	20 (+5)	28 (+9)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +13, Wis +16, Cha +13
Skills Insight +16, Perception +16, Religion +19, Stealth +18
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, stunned, unconscious
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 26
Languages understands all languages but cannot speak
Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

TRAITS

Antilife Shell. The champion is surrounded by a magical barrier in a 5-foot radius sphere that moves with it, remaining centered on the champion and hedging out living creatures. The barrier forcibly prevents living creatures from passing or reaching through.

If the champion's movement forces a living creature through the barrier, the effect ends until the start of the champion's next turn. If the effect is dispelled (such as via a *dispel magic* spell) the effect is instead suppressed until the start of the champion's next turn.

Herald of the Apocalypse. The champion cannot be compelled to act in a manner that prevents it from killing living creatures at every opportunity. The champion's attacks are magical and grant a +3 bonus to its attack rolls (included in the attack). When the champion hits a living creature with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 36 (8d8) necrotic damage (included in the attack). Additionally, the champion cannot be disarmed of its weapons.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The champion makes four Sickle attacks.

Death Sentence (Recharge 6). The champion commands a living creature it can see within 300 feet to die. The target must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or take necrotic damage equal to its hit point maximum. A creature that fails this saving throw by 10 or more dies instantly.

Sickle. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 10 ft. or range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (2d12 + 7) slashing damage. If the target is a living creature, it takes an extra 36 (8d8) necrotic damage. If the sickle was thrown, it returns to the champion's hand at the end of the turn during which it was thrown.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The champion 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. The champion regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Aspect of Death (Costs 3 Actions). The champion recharges its Death Sentence action.

Shadow of Death. The champion magically teleports to an unoccupied space within 10 feet of a living creature it can see and becomes invisible. The invisibility lasts for 1 minute or until the champion makes an attack.

Sickle. The champion makes a Sickle attack.

Assassin Vipers

In the deepest forests, darkest swamps, and most primeval jungles, serpents with potent toxins thrive. Centuries of breeding in isolation have pushed one such family of venomous snakes to the absolute pinnacle of lethality. Called assassin vipers, these abominations of evolution slither through the underbrush, lurking until worthy prey comes within reach. The greatest of killers wish they could possess the killing potential of a single assassin viper bite; whose venom is so potent even mighty dragons can succumb within minutes. Revered by druids, hunted by rangers, and feared by all, these creatures are a testament to nature's fearsome power.

BANDED AGONY VIPER

The venom of the agony viper can leave a storm giant writhing on the ground, like a worm beneath the hot summer sun. An expert in stealth, most don't see the agony viper until they're too busy screaming in pain to notice anything at all. A typical viper is nearly 5 ft. in length, mailed in color changing scales that can slowly adapt to almost any terrain. Its head is crowned with a central third eye, which it uses to detect the body heat of nearby prey. Slow and meticulous, these serpents have little reason to fear other creatures, biting anything that comes within reach. Agony vipers do not swallow their prey whole, instead tearing off chunks with their teeth into more manageable bits.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a banded agony viper with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

BANDED AGONY VIPER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	Banded agony vipers are known to hunt large game, their potent toxins debilitating even hearty creatures after a few bites. They are incredibly patient, waiting until a creature is alone before striking.
18	The agony viper's venom can affect even creatures that are ordinarily immune to toxins and poisons. Such protections mitigate the toxin's effects, but don't protect against it entirely. Furthermore, the agony viper can conceal itself in plain sight, turning almost invisible.
23	Abilities that bolster a creature's natural defenses, such as *bless*, or the aura of a paladin are of great help against an agony viper. Once a creature fights off the initial surge of incapacitating venom, their body goes into antibody overdrive, and they won't succumb again until the shock has worn off.

The Banded Agony Viper

The bite from a banded agony viper is oft compared to having one's teeth extracted through one's ears. Having never experienced either event, I can only assume the comparison is apt. One wealthy aristocrat tried to keep an agony viper in a cage, but opened it when the cage looked empty, fearing it had escaped. It had not, it was simply so capable of blending in with the loose leaves he had scattered around that it appeared invisible. It ripped his throat out and slithered away, killing seventeen more people before it was finally dealt with. And people say adventurers are reckless.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Druids, Fighters, Perception (High), Range, Rangers, Reach

Foils: Constitution (Low), Paladins, Rogues, Warlocks

TACTICS

As lurkers, agony vipers are simple to use in an encounter. They should always start a fight either hidden via their Hide in Plain Sight action, or out of the party's vision, such as around a corner or in a concealed area. Then, it attacks the first character to blunder within 5 feet of the viper. On subsequent turns, it continues attacking, using its Retaliate feature to potentially land a second hit each round and trigger Viper Strike again for massive additional damage. The agony viper fights until it is killed.

Easier Tactics – Don't use the viper's Retaliate reaction to significantly reduce the threat it poses. You can also have the viper not start the fight hidden, preventing it from using its Ambush Master trait. Finally, consider having the viper retreat if seriously wounded.

Harder Tactics – Wait to launch the viper's initial attack until there's only one creature within 5 feet of it. If that creature fails its initial saving throw and becomes incapacitated, the viper should move to attack a different target. Spread the Torturing Venom to as many characters as possible, relying on other monsters in the encounter to finish off the debilitated party members.

TALIEN'S NOTES

I'll never forget the day the Archdruidess Ionia said, "Watch this." That phrase so often precedes unsafe shenanigans, and coming from Ionia, stunned me into silence. She picked up a branch and, with a deft thrust, flipped a snake into the air. My gaze lingered on its flanged yellow-orange hood and fangs nearly 6 inches in length, as it writhed on the end of the stick and made a few futile lunges toward Ionia's hand. She said, matter-of-factly, that I'd be dead if I took two more steps forward. I'm skeptical of her certainty, but Ionia is not prone to exaggeration. One of many reasons I prefer libraries to swamps.

PLOT HOOKS

Snake Charmer. A traveling circus performer has lost his banded agony viper, the star of the show. While he is fairly sure the beast is still in the fairgrounds, the creature must be returned unharmed and fit enough for tonight's show. The best he can offer is free tickets for life for the viper's return, but so far no one has accepted the offer.

A Nest of Vipers. A deranged druid has been breeding banded agony vipers for years, filling the nearby jungle with the deadly serpents. As the body count continues to mount, a conclave of rangers is offering nearby 5,000 gp per viper head, and 50,000 gp for the druid, dead or alive.

Weird Magic. A hag has developed a potion of eternal life, but requires the venom of a banded agony viper to complete her concoction. She promises the first draught to whoever brings her a cup of venom first, which has already led to the deaths of seven bright-eyed adventurers.

TREASURE

All attempts to extract potent venom from a banded agony viper has failed, with the toxin losing its painful properties within 24 hours to the disappointment of many would-be assassins. However, the shred skin of one of these creatures can be used as a potent component for spellcasting. When a creature casts a spell that deals damage it can use an intact shed skin of a banded agony viper as a material component, which is consumed when the spell is cast. Doing so causes the spell to treat anything that would be immune to spell's damage as though it had resistance instead.

ECOLOGY

Banded agony vipers prefer to dwell in dense forests and swamps, but their natural swimming ability allows them to thrive near rivers and wetlands as well. Some have even been sighted in coastal waters, lurking near shore and preying on tourists and sea life alike. While tracking an agony viper is near impossible, its territory is always filled with the corpses and bones of countless creatures. The smell of death permeates these zones, turning them into fetid realms that reek of death. Collectors and powerful druids sometimes keep banded agony vipers, though even when charmed the beasts are cold and aggressive.

BANDED AGONY VIPER

Small Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 76 (17d6 +17)
Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	22 (+6)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +7
Skills Stealth +10, Survival +7, Perception +7
Damage Resistances poison
Condition Immunities prone
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages —
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

TRAITS

Ambush Master. The viper has a +5 bonus to attack rolls against surprised creatures.

Hide in Plain Sight. The viper can spend one minute camouflaging itself into the natural environment, during which time it can neither take other actions nor spend movement. Once camouflaged in this manner, the viper is invisible and has a +10 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks for as long as it does not move from that space.

Torturing Venom. When the viper hits a flesh and blood creature with a bite attack, it may inject its venom into the target, which causes agonizing pain. At the start of each of the creature's turns, it must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or fall prone, become incapacitated, and unable to utter any sound other than agonized screams until the start of its next turn. Once a creature has succeeded on three saving throws in this manner, the effect ends for it and the creature is immune to the effects of Torturing Venom for 24 hours. A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on saving throws against this feature.

Viper Strike (1/round). When the viper hits a flesh and blood creature with a weapon attack, it can choose to deal an additional 55 (10d10) poison damage. If a creature is immune to poison damage dealt by this feature, it is instead has resistance.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (1d10+6) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Retaliate. When the viper is hit by a weapon attack from a creature within 5 ft. of it, it may make a bite attack against that creature.





EMERALD SHADOW MAMBA

Mottled green with an asymmetrical triangular pattern and striking red frills, the emerald shadow mamba is a gorgeous reptile. Like all assassin vipers, the shadow mamba is skilled in the art of stealth, latching onto its prey to inject copious amounts of necrotizing venom. Unusually aggressive and highly mobile, these vipers attack against anything they perceive as a threat. A mamba gets its name from both its elegant scales and ferocious speed, dashing between the trees like a deadly shadow. The creatures are notorious for continuing to attack long after their foes have succumbed, leaving behind bodies bloated with venom and peppered with bite marks.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an emerald shadow mamba with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

EMERALD SHADOW MAMBA LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	The emerald shadow mamba is an ambush predator, but once it strikes from hiding, it latches on to its target, injecting copious amounts of venom until the creature is dead. Shadow mambas do not let go, and can bite repeatedly in rapid succession, overcoming even the most resilient immune system.
20	Once an emerald shadow mamba's toxins take hold, the victim's physical abilities are completely nullified, leaving them barely able to move and completely unable to attack. Spellcasters are unaffected, making magic a welcome ally when dealing with this lethal serpent. This toxin, once resisted, won't affect a creature again until a day has passed.
24	The shadow mamba is capable of evading even magical effects that normally target a creature's body, such as *cone of cold*. In addition to being impressive to watch, it makes the mamba hard to pin down. Target its mind for maximum effectiveness.

TACTICS

The emerald shadow mamba should always start a fight in hiding, using its Ambush Master trait to all but guarantee its first salvo of attacks lands successfully. Once it does, grapple the most vulnerable target (as long as they are Medium or smaller) and don't let go. The mamba should use its Bite legendary action to keep dealing damage to its chosen target. If a creature is poisoned, it doesn't make Constitution saving throws for each Bite that lands, only at the end of each of its turns. This is important, because once a creature succeeds on a saving throw against the mamba's poison, it becomes immune for 24 hours. When the mamba's target becomes immune to its toxins, move to another character and repeat.

Use Masterful Reflexes at the first available opportunity, the mamba isn't smart enough to strategize about what actions the party might take, it's just acting on instinct. If the mamba is reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, use the Move legendary action to Disengage and retreat, repeating as needed to get away from the fight.

Easier Tactics — Unusually, the best way to make the shadow mamba less dangerous is to focus its attacks on one character, sticking with that target even after they succeed on their saving throw. The mamba's poison is the most dangerous thing about it, and this limits the impact it can have substantially.

Harder Tactics — The mamba should move through the party on its first turn, attacking three different characters with its Bite. You want to spread the poison around as much as possible, using legendary actions to Bite again, potentially hitting the whole party during the surprise round. If the viper can't get a surprise round, it should use its Move legendary action to retreat and try again. Only once every character in the party has succumbed to the poison or succeed on their saving throws should the viper pick a target and grapple them, biting the same character repeatedly.

The Emerald Shadow Mamba

Quick as a flash, the emerald shadow mamba I considered instead naming the "emerald lightning mamba", but there's already a lightning mamba in the deserts outside the Reach. Seeing as that one can actually project bolts of electrical energy, a figurative use of the same name felt strained. Instead, the shadow mamba derives its name from the manner in which it constricts victims. The creature's scales and fangs exude a potent necrotizing toxin that inflicts harm in the same manner as spells like blight or the touch of an undead. Quite phenomenal in a naturally occurring organism!

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Athletics (High), Clerics, Druids, Paladins, Poison (Protection from), Rangers

Foils: Barbarians, Constitution (Targeting), Fighters, Monks, Strength (Targeting)

PLOT HOOKS

Snakes on a Boat. A ship carrying tropical cargo has a deadly stowaway; an emerald shadow mamba. With half the crew dead in just under 24 hours, the vessel is dead in the water with the survivors holed up in the

captain's cabin. Those who manage to bail out the desperate crew would certainly be entitled to a portion of the cargo.

Hazardous Workplace. An exquisite traveling dancer uses an emerald shadow mamba in her performances. This frightening combination makes for a legendary show, but occasionally the mamba gets loose and bites a member of the audience. Curiously, these victims always seem to be high profile bounties or targets for assassination.

Habitat Loss. An industrious kingdom has been clearing the jungle to make room for expansive agriculture. The local wildlife, including a large population of emerald shadow mambas, have suffered terribly. A circle of druid conservationists have petitioned on behalf of the jungle, but few are willing to protect a "forest of deadly serpents and stinging insects".

TREASURE

The venom of an emerald shadow mamba retains its potency for up to a year outside the snake. While dangerous, a shadow mamba can be milked for three doses of venom every week. Doing so requires a successful DC 23 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check against an incapacitated mamba. A single dose can be extracted from a dead emerald shadow mamba with minimal effort (and a great deal less risk). The venom has the following properties:

Shadow Mamba Venom (Injury). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 10 minutes. While poisoned in this manner, the creature's Strength and Dexterity scores are 1 (-5 modifier to associated rolls), and it cannot make attacks. A creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature succeeds on a saving throw or the condition ends for it, it is immune to the poison for 24 hours.

ECOLOGY

Emerald shadow mambas are found in towering rainforests, mountainous terrain, and murky swamps. They are adroit climbers and swimmers, capable of traversing both sheer cliffs and water with the same speed as open ground. Their favored prey is moderate in size: foxes, young deer, and most kinds of river fish. The mamba wraps around the prey and chokes it to death, then feeds on the spot, confident its bright markings will keep the competition away. While mambas never go looking for a fight, they rarely pass up the chance to attack creatures they come across. Even those that flee from these serpents may find themselves being chased through the jungle by an angry snake. Emerald shadow mambas are solitary snakes, establishing large territories well away from others of its kind. When mating, shadow mambas gather in great numbers and race across the terrain in elaborate athletic displays for mates, an event that is best witnessed from very far away.

EMERALD SHADOW MAMBA

Small Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 126 (23d6 +46)
Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	26 (+7)	15 (+2)	4 (-3)	19 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +12, Wis +9
Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +10, Stealth +12, Perception +9, Survival +9
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities prone
Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages —
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

TRAITS

Ambush Master. The mamba has a +5 bonus to attack rolls against surprised creatures.

Lethal Injection. Creatures grappled by the mamba take 35 (10d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of their turns.

Masterful Reflexes (1/turn). When the snake attempts a Strength or Constitution saving throw, it may instead attempt a Dexterity saving throw (the save DC remains the same).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mamba makes three attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 20 (2d12+7) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. While poisoned in this manner, a creature's Strength and Dexterity scores are 1 (-5 modifier to associated rolls), and it cannot make attacks. A creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature succeeds on a saving throw or the condition end for it, it is immune to the mamba's poison for 24 hours.

The mamba may grapple its target. While grappling in this manner, the mamba cannot bite another creature.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The mamba 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. The mamba regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Bite. The snake makes a bite attack.

Quick Reflexes. The snake attempts a Dexterity (Acrobatics) ability check.

Move. The snake uses the Disengage action and moves its speed.

KINGSLAYER COBRA

The largest and most deadly of the assassin vipers, the kingslayer cobra is a killer of unparalleled lethality. A massive serpent nearly twelve feet in length, these snakes have burnished golden scales that give the illusion of slithering molten metal when in motion. Their hoods are frilled and nearly two feet wide when fully displayed, and a pair of long tendrils on the snake's face give the impression of an elegant mustache. A cobra's fangs are as hard as adamantine, able to deliver a potent venom that surpasses any other naturally occurring toxin.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a kingslayer cobra with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

KINGSLAYER COBRA LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Cobras of the kingslayer variety inject a venom so potent it can kill a creature in under a minute. One bite is all it takes, but there is a short window of time to rush to the creature's aid.
21	The kingslayer cobra is capable of hiding even in the midst of a fight, slipping into the shadows and vanishing without warning. Beware of doing battle with one in areas of ample cover and darkness.
25	Kingslayer cobras don't actually poison their victims, so to speak. Creatures with a powerful immune system warded against mundane toxins will still be partially shielded from the venom, but spells like *lesser restoration* which are effective against poisons do nothing to remove the toxin of a kingslayer cobra bite. Only spells that bolster a creature's immune system are of help here, such as *bless*.

TACTICS

The kingslayer cobra works best as a hit and run predator, starting the fight from hiding (as usual) and lashing out at the first creature that gets in range. If the creature is surprised, don't forget the cobra's Lethal Strike trait, potentially allowing it to drop a character in a single turn. Once the cobra strikes, it should move away, taking opportunity attacks if needed to get behind cover or concealment. This allows it to hide at the end of its turn using its Hidden Doom trait. You want to attack a different character each turn if possible, to maximize exposure to the cobra's Death Venom.

Additionally, if the cobra can't hide, try to position it near ranged characters and spellcasters who will try to retreat from the cobra and potentially provoke opportunity attacks. With only one attack per turn, the cobra benefits greatly from being able to use its reaction for another Bite.

Easier Tactics – The best way to make the kingslayer cobra less dangerous is to keep attacking a few party members, don't worry about spreading the Death Venom to multiple victims, just attack the paladins, barbarians, and fighters who can handle the damage and aren't likely to die outright from failed Constitution saving throws.

The Kingslayer Cobra

Let me tell you the tale of how the kingslayer cobra got its name. Ages ago, an efreeti king descended from the plane of fire, declaring himself the new lord of the material plane. Guarded by ancient wards, no blade or spell could harm him, and all who rose against him were put to the sword. Soon no heroes remained to oppose the tyrant. One day, as the king lounged in his throne, a ranger approached. Old and wise, she offered to entertain the king with a display of her pets. Among them, a shimmering orange-yellow cobra. The king leaned forward, captivated by its resemblance to molten gold. The ranger offered the serpent to the king, and he took it gingerly. "Be careful, he bites," were the last words the king heard before the snake's fangs plunged into his neck. Evidently his blessing of protection didn't consider teeth to be blades. The moral is, of course: be exactingly specific when dealing with magic.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Lurker

Favors: Barbarians, Constitution (High), Druids, Paladins, Spells (Resurrection), Rangers

Foils: Bards, Monks, Perception (Low), Sorcerers, Warlocks

Harder Tactics – Have the cobra wait until the party is resting or otherwise occupied with another issue. Any situation in which the cobra is not the most important objective in the room is extremely dangerous. The players will pretty quickly figure out the cobra needs to be the focus of any battle, but every round it takes for them to understand this is more time for the cobra to do some serious damage. Have the cobra retreat after each hit, as provoking an attack of opportunity is worth it in almost every circumstance.

PLOT HOOKS

Help Wanted. A devious warlock has put out a public request for a kingslayer cobra egg. He won't disclose what it is for, but the rarity and dangerous nature of acquiring these eggs makes the reward quite significant.

Tactical Serpent Strike. An unknown assassin has been teleporting a kingslayer cobra in and out of the residences of retired heroes. Nothing

of valuable has been taken, leading the authorities to believe the motive is sadistic vengeance. Attempts to either locate the spellcaster responsible or stop the cobra have failed, leaving the authorities desperate for a solution.

Year of the Snake. A race of snake people have been experimenting on kingslayer cobras, attempting to splice the cobra's deadly abilities with their own morphology. A successful merge would lead to a new generation of serpentfolk, capable of slaying any that dared oppose them.

TREASURE

A kingslayer cobra's venom cannot survive long outside the snake, and is therefore unfit for use as a poison. However, it can be used to create a powerful antivenom that can cure any known poison. Milking a kingslayer cobra requires a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Handle Animal) check, producing enough venom to make a single *potion of absolute purity*, which is detailed below. Crafting a *potion of absolute purity* requires a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Alchemist Supplies) check over the course of 8 hours of strenuous activity.

Potion of Absolute Purity

Potion, legendary

When you drink this potion, your body is flushed with powerful chemicals that purge away any corruption. This immediately ends the following effects and makes you immune to subsequent instances of the effects for 1 hour; disease, blindness, deafness, exhaustion, petrified, stunned, unconscious, and any reductions to ability scores or your hit point maximum.

ECOLOGY

True to their name, kingslayer cobras thrive in cities and other urban environments. They are skilled at climbing sheer surfaces like the walls of buildings and can swim through canals, sewer systems, and other bodies of water. With blindsight, the cobras can operate efficiently at night, and the cramped environs of a metropolis keeps their prey from running far before they fall over dead. An infestation of kingslayer cobras is incredibly difficult to root out, who will prey on pets, gnomes, halflings, and even small children. Entire communities would prefer to pack up and move rather than deal with even a single snake. Among more tribal peoples these cobras are a source of awe and fear, sent by the gods to punish the destructive hubris of more "civilized" peoples.

KINGSLAYER COBRA

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)
Hit Points 263 (31d8 + 124)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	30 (+10)	19 (+4)	4 (-3)	21 (+5)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +10, Wis +11
Skills Athletics +14, Stealth +22, Perception +11, Survival +11
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages —
Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

TRAITS

Death Venom. When the cobra hits a living creature with a bite attack, it can inject its venom into the target, which causes near-instant death. At the start of each of an affected creature's turns, it must attempt a DC 24 Constitution saving throw. If a creature fails this saving throw three times, it dies. Once a creature has succeed on three saving throws in this manner, the effect ends and the creature is immune to the effects of Death Venom for 24 hours. A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on saving throws against this feature.

Hidden Doom. At the end of each of its turns, the cobra may attempt a Dexterity (Stealth) ability check (no action required).

Lethal Strike. When the cobra hits a surprised creature, the creature takes an additional 23 (2d12 + 10) piercing damage from the attack.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, one creature, reach 10 ft. *Hit:* 23 (2d12 + 10) piercing damage, and 55 (10d10) poison damage. If a creature would be immune to poison damage dealt by this feature, it is instead resistant.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN – SNAKES ARE ANIMALS LIKE ANY OTHER

Snakes are often portrayed unfavorably in fantasy and mythology, appearing in many RPGs as a symbol of evil. While you can certainly use the assassin vipers presented here in this manner, consider the merits of treating them in a more positive or neutral light. Snakes are not inherently cruel, nor are they emotionless. They experience fear, pleasure, and anger like many other animals. With the aid of magic and a little imagination, there is no reason an assassin viper in your game cannot be a heroic animal companion, affectionate pet, or an element of nature deserving of consideration and respect. Fantasy cultures and peoples may not fall prey to the same biases and stigmas our society has against snakes. To a city of reptile lovers, keeping an assassin viper may be the equivalent of owning an exotic bird or rearing a purebred horse!

Beasts of Legend

Nature has a magic all its own. By its mysterious will the world is shaped into a delicate balance that fosters life. When this balance is threatened, nature will call upon mighty defenders; great beasts of tremendous power that far surpasses their normal brethren. These "beasts of legend" are paragons of their kind, gifted with dramatically enhanced strength and size. Any beast, from humble raven to terrifying tyrannosaurus, can become these champions. Each beast of legend is unique, though all are considerably larger than ordinary members of their species. Additionally, certain characteristics of a beast are augmented to aid in protecting the balance. Thicker hides, longer claws, massive muscles, or natural camouflage; all are examples of the kind of augments a beast of legend may possess. Wherever there are wilds there exists the potential for a beast of legend, which the creatures of civilized societies would do well to respect.

BEAST OF LEGEND TEMPLATE

Every beast has the potential to become a beast of legend, obtained by gaining the "beast of legend" template, detailed below. When the need for a beast of legend arises, nature chooses a single specimen that is both local and well suited to the task of correcting the imbalances that are ravaging the world. It takes a great catastrophe to warrant a beast of legend. The largescale logging of an ancient forest, pollution of a great mountain lake, or the hunting of a creature to near extinction are all examples of the need for a beast of legend.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a beast of legend with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

BEAST OF LEGEND LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Ancient creatures, or those empowered by nature itself, beasts of legend are the paragons of the animal kingdom. Bigger, faster, and stronger, each one has unique abilities that make it a deadly threat.
21	No two beasts of legend are alike, each possessing special augments that make it more effective in combat. These can improve its defenses, empower its attacks, or grant it unique abilities, all of which you must anticipate to gain the advantage in battle. However, they will always fight similarly to their mundane counterparts, only better.
26	Though much more powerful, a beast of legend still retains its animal intelligence. Clever exploitation of this fact can be the difference between victory or a bloody death against a beast of legend. They also have no capacity to dispel or counter magical effects, making ongoing spells an effective weapon.

TACTICS

Beasts are generally simple creatures when it comes to matters of strategy. What tactics you employ when running a beast of legend should be based around the tactics of the base creature used to create it. Tigers and other stealthy creatures will play more like lurkers, while a dire wolf of legend is most likely the leader of a massive pack. Traits such as Awesome Blow, Devastator, and Thick Hide favor brute beasts of legend, and are great options for beasts like bears or other large creatures. Camouflage, Surprise Attack, and Crushing grip favor lurkers, while Fleet of Foot is always a good option for a skirmisher. Note that many beasts are defined by their modes of movement. A giant eagle of legend and a giant octopus of legend should have traits and be fought in environments that heavily favor their ability to fly and swim.

Easier Tactics – Have the beast of legend be easy to find, and not inherently aggressive toward the PCs. This will give them time to strategically approach the situation, potentially even charming it or using the Animal Handling skill to gain an edge. Only if explicitly provoked will the beast of legend attack, and with all the subtlety and strategy of a wild animal.

Harder Tactics – Play up the beast's intuitive cunning, particularly if its proficient in Insight. The beast should be elusive and cautious, attacking anyone whose motives are not explicitly non-hostile. Make sure the beast has traits with strong synergy and rely upon those synergies. Your beast will be a one trick pony, but it will be one hell of a one trick.

PLOT HOOKS

Call Of The Wild. A dire wolf of legend has amassed a great pack of wolves, over two hundred strong. The wolves have slaughtered any hunters and explorers who venture into their pine forests, with the exception of a local barbarian tribe that has migrated to the area. The tribe has begun erecting a gigantic totem, dedicated to the savage aspect of nature.

The Great Hunt. Once a year, a conclave of rangers attempts to hunt a giant ape of legend. While the ape has yet to be captured or killed, rangers that survive are honored by the locals with a great feast and the title of "stalker". This year, the rangers are shorthanded and are looking for a few adventurers to flesh out their hunting party.

Mobile Home. A community of halflings used a brontosaurus of legend as a home, building a small fortress upon its back. The brontosaurus seems content with this arrangement and guards the halflings against any assault. However, a rival halfling community seeks to bring the beast down so they can hold a grand feast of legendary proportions.



The Beast of Legend

I once thought the notion of a "rat of legend" to be comical; no longer. After nearly losing several fingers, it is clear that any creature that has been endowed with this unique augmentation is extraordinarily dangerous. These creatures are more than just natural phenomena. They are designed and set with purpose. Each of their adaptations are uniquely suited to thwart whatever force threatens the natural world around them. I have yet to find the party responsible for their creation. A beast of legend's appearance is spontaneous, but always in a moment of dire need. Rangers have advised me to leave beasts of legend alone, while druids simply state that it is "the will of the wild". My insatiable curiosity has me ignoring the advice of the former, and my skepticism doubting the latter. Nonetheless, their words have me treating nature with a greater degree of respect. Just in case.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute, Lurker, or Skirmisher

Favors: Bards, Charisma (High), Intelligence (High), Invisibility, Wisdom (High), Wizards

Foils: AC (Low), Fighters, Melee, Paladins, Rogues

TALIEN'S NOTES

I consulted with both Ionia and Haloa – druid and ranger, respectively – about these "beasts of legend" and received highly distinct opinions. A quote from each is provided.

"A redefinition of apex, truly. They retain their essential nature, and there is no greater thrill than to perform the dance of life in their presence. In essence, they are nature's child prodigies dedicated to serving the balance." – Ionia Faelindel

"See this scar? Giant crocodile of legend. This one? Same beast. One scar is good prey. Two scars is a worthy foe. Three never happens."
– Haloa Okalani

TREASURE

A beast of legend has no more reason to hoard treasure than an ordinary member of its species. Admittedly a raven of legend will probably amass a collection of shiny objects that would make a dragon envious. In the rare instances when a druid or similarly powerful spellcaster that has a great respect for nature encounters a beast of legend, they may find themselves blessed with the knowledge of how to create one themselves. This effect permanently adds the following spell to their class spell list or to their spells known (when appropriate for their spellcasting class). The spellcaster must be able to cast the spell in order to benefit from this effect.

New Spell – Champion Of The Wild

This spell is a class spell for druids.

Champion Of The Wild

9th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 24 hours
Range: touch
Components: V, S, M (a star emerald worth 5,000 gp)
Duration: instantaneous

After spending the casting time listening and conversing with nature itself, you touch a beast that is native to the surrounding environment. The target becomes a beast of legend, gaining the Beast of Legend Template. You choose which proficiencies the beast gains according to Saving Throw Proficiencies and Skill Proficiencies feature and select the beast's special traits according to its Expanded Traits feature.

ECOLOGY

Beasts of legend share the same ecology of their ordinary animal counterparts. However, a beast of legend is always in balance with its environment and has an instinctual drive to destroy harmful influences from unnatural sources. Other animals in the area seem to understand the role a beast of legend serves. They will not attack, harass, or stand in the way of the mighty creature unless forced to do so. Druids and rangers often seek out beasts of legend to study or worship them. Those who are of a more evil bent are prone toward hunting or enslaving such powerful beasts, but the risks of such an endeavor are quite extreme.

BEAST OF LEGEND TEMPLATE

You can create a beast of legend by taking the statistics of any beast and making the following changes:

Unusual Size. The beasts' size category increases by one and adjusts its hit dice accordingly. If the beast is already gargantuan, the dimensions of the space it occupies increases by 10 feet in all directions.

BEAST OF LEGEND EXPANDED TRAITS

TRAIT	BENEFIT
Awesome Blows	When the beast scores a hit with a natural weapon against a creature that is the same size or smaller, it may push that creature up to 30 feet away from it in a straight line.
Camouflage	The beast can take the Hide action as a bonus action. Additionally, while the beast stands perfectly still for 1 minute, it becomes invisible until it spends movement or takes an action.
Crushing Grip	When the beast scores a hit against a creature it is grappling, it instead scores a critical hit.
Devastator	The beast has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks against creatures smaller than it. Additionally, once on each of its turns the beast can spend half its movement to deal 20 bludgeoning damage to an object or structure within 5 feet of it.
Fleet of Foot	The beast's speed increases by 30 feet and it may take the Dash or Disengage actions as a bonus action. Additionally, the beast can spend 5 feet of movement to free itself from nonmagical restraints or a grapple.
Frenzied Attacks	As a bonus action on each of its turns, the beast can make a single weapon attack.
Surprise Attack	If the beast is hidden at the start of its turn, it deals an extra 35 (10d6) damage when it first hits a creature with a weapon attack on that turn. This extra damage does not benefit from the beast's Heavy Hitter feature.
Thick Hide	The beast gains a +5 bonus to its AC, and has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.
Magic Resistance	The beast takes half damage from spells and has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.
King/Queen of the Jungle	If the beast is slain, it magically returns to life with all of its hit points within 1d4+1 days somewhere in its natural habitat. This effect is prevented if the beast is slain outside of its natural habitat or its habitat is destroyed while it is dead.

Hit Dice. The beast gains 10 additional hit dice and recalculates its maximum hit points using these hit dice.

Ability Score Increases. The beast gains 16 ability points, each of which can be used to increase an ability score of its choice by one. An ability score cannot be increase above 30 using this feature.

Saving Throw Proficiencies. The beast gains proficiency in two saving throws of its choice.

Skills Proficiencies. The beast gains proficiency in three skills of its choice, from the following options: Athletics, Acrobatics, Stealth, Insight, Perception, or Survival. If the beast chooses a skill in which it is already proficient, it doubles its proficiency bonus in that skill.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When the beast fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Heavy Hitter. The beast deals an additional three damage dice on all its damage rolls. (Ex: A beast that deals 2d8 slashing damage on a claw attack now deals 5d8 slashing damage.)

Challenge Rating. The beasts challenge rating increases by 9, and its proficiency bonus is increased according to its new challenge rating.

Expanded Traits. The beast gains three traits, chosen from the Beast of Legend Traits table below. When applying these traits, you do not need to include all the features written here when adjusting the beast's statistics would prove adequate enough to convey some or all of the trait's improvements.

Legendary Actions. The beast can take three 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. The beast regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

> **Brace.** The next time the beast would take damage before the start of its next turn, it instead takes half damage.
>
> **Ferocity.** The beast moves up to its speed or jumps a distance up to half its speed. The beast then makes a single weapon attack.
>
> **Keen Sight.** The beast makes a Wisdom (Perception) check. Until the end of their next turn, each creature the beast detects with this ability check has disadvantage on the next attack roll against the beast.

TYRANNOSAURUS REX OF LEGEND

Gargantuan Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 379 (23d20 + 138)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	2 (-4)	20 (+5)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Con +12, Wis +11
Skills Athletics +16, Insight +11, Perception +17
Senses passive Perception 27
Languages —
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When the tyrannosaurus fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Devastator. The tyrannosaurus has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks against creature's smaller than it. Additionally, on each of its turns the tyrannosaurus can spend half its movement to deal 20 bludgeoning damage to an object or structure within 5 ft. of it.

Frenzied Attacks. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the tyrannosaurus can make a single weapon attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tyrannosaurus makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail. It can't make both attacks against the same target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 55 (7d12 + 10) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (Escape DC 26). Until this grappled ends, the target is restrained, and the tyrannosaurus can't bite another target.

Crushing Grip. If the tyrannosaurus scores a hit with its bite attack against a creature it is grappling, it instead scores a critical hit.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 31 (6d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The tyrannosaurus 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. The tyrannosaurus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Brace. The next time the tyrannosaurus would take damage before the start of its next turn, it instead takes half damage.

Ferocity. The tyrannosaurus moves up to its speed or jumps a distance up to half its speed. The tyrannosaurus then makes a single attack.

Keen Sight. The tyrannosaurus makes a Wisdom (Perception) check. Until the end of their next turn, each creature the tyrannosaurus detects with this ability check has disadvantage on the next attack roll against the tyrannosaurus.

GIANT ELK OF LEGEND

Gargantuan Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 217 (15d20 + 60)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	7 (-1)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +7
Skills Athletics +11, Perception +11, Survival +7
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons
Senses passive Perception 21
Languages understands common, Elvish, and Sylvan but can't speak them
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Awesome Blows. When the elk scores a hit with a natural weapon against a creature that is the same size or smaller, it may push that creature up to 30 feet away from it in a straight line.

Charge. If the elk moves at least 20 ft. in a straight line towards a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 17 (5d6) damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

King of the Jungle. If the elk is slain, it magically returns to life with all its hit points within 1d4+1 days somewhere in its natural habitat. This effect is prevented if the elk is slain outside of its natural habitat or its habitat is destroyed while it is dead.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When the elk fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (5d6+ 7) bludgeoning damage.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone creature. *Hit:* 38 (7d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The elk 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. The elk regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Brace. The next time the elk would take damage before the start of its next turn, it instead takes half damage.

Ferocity. The elk moves up to its speed or jumps a distance up to half its speed. The elk then makes a single attack.

Keen Sight. The elk makes a Wisdom (Perception) check. Until the end of their next turn, each creature the elk detects with this ability check has disadvantage on the next attack roll against the elk.

TIGER OF LEGEND

Huge Beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +9, Dex +7
Skills Acrobatics +7, Stealth +11, Perception +6, Survival +7
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages —
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

TRAITS

Camouflage. The tiger can take the hide action as a bonus action. Additionally, while the beast stands perfectly still for 1 minute, it becomes invisible until it spends movement or takes actions.

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

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When the tiger fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The tiger takes half damage from spells and has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Pounce. If the tiger moves at least 20 ft. forward in a straight line toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the tiger can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Surprise Attacks. If the tiger is hidden at the start of its turn, it deals an extra 35 (10d6) damage when it first hits a creature with a weapon attack that turn.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) slashing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The tiger 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. The tiger regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Brace. The next time the tiger would take damage before the start of its next turn, it instead takes half damage.

Ferocity. The tiger moves up to its speed or jumps a distance up to half its speed. The tiger then makes a single attack.

Keen Sight. The tiger makes a Wisdom (Perception) check. Until the end of their next turn, each creature the tiger detects with this ability check has disadvantage on the next attack roll against the tiger.

Behemoth Mimics

The humble mimic has been menacing adventurers for as long as chests have been known to contain loot. It should come as no surprise that with its poorly understood origins and even more mysterious biology, the mimic familiar to so many adventurers was just the larval stage of a bizarre life cycle. As mimics eat, they increase their mass until they have reached the limits of their environment. The largest of these mimics undergo a metamorphosis, permanently assuming the general shape of large objects and structures. These "behemoth mimics" are highly specialized hunters that are adapted to specific environments. Different strains of behemoth mimics specialize in specific shapes. Their size is tremendous, able to give an almost flawless impression of a castle, tower, or even seafaring ship. Like a pitcher plant adapted to feed on humanoids, behemoth mimics can lure huge numbers of witless adventurers to their deaths.



LIVING GALLEON

A massive mimic adapted for life at sea, the living galleon sails the seas cunningly disguised as an abandoned vessel. A deadly trap for pirates and privateers, a living galleon puts less work into its disguise than the other behemoth mimics. These creatures can assume a huge diversity of shapes; warships, cargo vessels, and even submersibles are not outside the realms of possibility. These mimics are very detail-oriented, flying local flags, shaping custom decals, and occasionally hosting a hostage skeleton crew to make their disguises all the more convincing. Only when the mimic springs its trap is its true nature finally revealed; wood morphs into pulsating flesh, gigantic eyes open across the hull, and thick tentacles begin dragging victims below decks.

The Living Galleon

Another good reason to stay away from the ocean, as if we needed more. The disguise of these mimics is so effective I suspect one could drift into port without arousing any suspicion. These mimics have been known to even allow a small crew to reside upon them. A symbiotic relationship that lasts for as long as the mimic allows it. As they are completely and utterly motivated by food, I imagine it's possible to talk your way out of becoming a mimic's meal by offering a safer and more reliable alternative. I suggest offering up a local pirate gang or other seafaring malcontents. They will likely jump at the chance to ransack an "abandoned" vessel, leading to a perfect example of poetic justice.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker
Favors: Dexterity (High), Monks, Rangers, Teleportation, Wizards
Foils: Fighters, Mobility (Low), Sorcerers, Stealth, Warlocks

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a living galleon with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

LIVING GALLEON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Living galleons are masters of disguise. They can perfectly mimic a naval vessel down to the most minute detail, and even behave like how a ship would in a variety of situations. If you encounter an abandoned vessel on the high seas, best to leave it alone just to be safe.
20	A living galleon's major body parts are different sections of a vessel. The sails and mast are its head, the upper deck its tongue, and the lower deck its stomach. Somewhere on the mimic is its core, which must be destroyed to ensure the mimic's death.
24	A galleon's core is well protected within its stomach, typically hidden amongst other elements of its disguise. However, it is especially vulnerable to damage and the mimic will do everything in its power to keep dangerous foes away.

TALIEN'S NOTES

What extraordinary creatures! My heart has always had a fondness for the mimic and its brilliant adaptation. The "mimic test" has proven to be an exceptional measure of whether one is cut out for the adventuring lifestyle. Much like their lesser brethren, I suspect behemoth mimics are responsible for a great many dungeon delving careers getting cut short. I can hardly fault the mimics for this. After all, it is we adventurers who dive heard first into the dark corners of the world in search of glory and treasure. One doesn't fault the tiger for hunting the antelope – it is in its nature. Let the behemoth mimics be a lesson to those who are overconfident in their skills, a fitting punishment for the rampant insufferable arrogance within the adventuring community.

TACTICS

As a lurker, much of the galleon's tactics rely on a successful ambush. If the PCs are fooled by the mimic, allow them to explore the ships until one of them attempts to go below decks. Then spring the trap. Use the galleon's Tentacle Rigging attack to grapple a target, spending movement to drag the affected creature below decks. Never put more than one creature below decks at a time, as it makes it easier to discover the Core. Remember that the mimic has firepower to engage in naval combat with its Bone Ballista. The mimic's only goal is food, so it will happily abduct enough creatures to satisfy its hunger before disengaging. Your mimic's layout will play a big factor in combat. The more passageways you build into the mimic's Lower Deck section, the harder it will be for the PCs to find the Core. If the PCs are having overwhelming success against the mimic without discovering the core, it may use its Deception to play dead and sink beneath the waves. With its Unified Being trait, the mimic can quickly restore life to its "slain" sections and make a getaway, or even return for round two.

Easier Tactics – As soon as the PCs set foot on the galleon, begin the attack. While the mimic will likely still have surprise, a party that sticks together and takes on parts of the mimic one at a time will have great success. Don't drag party member's below decks with the Tentacle Rigging attack, and don't use Eviction until the Core is being directly assaulted.

Harder Tactics – Keep the PCs separated as much as possible. Use Unified Being to keep sections above 0 hit points, but never sacrifice more than half the Core's maximum hp in this manner. Only drag a PC to the Lower Decks if they get knocked unconscious, flooding the area with water via Organic Pumps to ensure the target drowns. Use Monstrous Shaping to create as many obstacles as possible between the PCs and the Core.

PLOT HOOKS

A Different Breed of Pirate. A pirate captain has entered into a partnership with a living galleon, terrorizing the high seas with a living warship. To feed the overly active mimic, the pirates have taken to raiding coastal towns and fishing villages, racking up a staggering body count in the process.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: PREPARING BEHEMOTH MIMIC ENCOUNTERS

Each behemoth mimic is like a miniature dungeon. Due to their huge size and nature as a creature, object, and structure, running these encounters is no small task. One of the most exciting aspects of the behemoth mimics is their customizable nature. Each mimic possesses a trait that allows it to appear as an "ordinary" object or structure of a certain type, with specific sections included for combat purposes. Beyond that, the layout and design of your behemoth mimic is something for you to create. You could make the interior of your mimic a dizzying maze, fill its sections with loot, or even add minions that have made the mimic their home. A more detailed mimic makes the disguise more convincing to your players in the metagame, in addition to increasing the encounter's difficulty. Consider the merits of presenting your behemoth mimic in the form of a battle map to explore, rather than a creature to be fought (at least at first). The mark of a well-made behemoth mimic encounter is the moment of dawning comprehension from the players, as they begin to realize what exactly they have just walked their characters into.

Shipwrecked. A famous shipwreck has been discovered that is rumored to contain a king's ransom within its shattered hull. The site is suspiciously close to several major population centers, and scores of divers begin planning expeditions to raid the sunken vessel.

Wrath of The Tempest. A humongous living galleon known as the Tempest has given up all pretense of subtlety and has taken to assaulting vessels in direct naval engagements. Having taken the shape of an orcish warship, this mimic is unusually large and able to precisely control a tremendous volume of weaponry.

TREASURE

A living galleon is cunning enough to understand that tasty humanoids like shiny objects. To better lure prey, these mimics will accumulate large volumes of treasure from the vessels of their victims. With their shapechanging features, the mimics will incorporate this wealth into beautiful decorations upon its body. Unless its body is completely destroyed in combat, the remains of a behemoth mimic can be preserved, repaired and repurposed into a stunning naval vessel. A repurposed behemoth mimic corpse has the following properties as a waterborne vehicle.

Waterborne Vehicle

SHIP	COST	SPEED	CREW	PASSENGERS
Living Galleon	100,000 gp	5 mph	30	70

CARGO (TONS)	AC	HP	DAMAGE THRESHOLD
200	18	500	20

ECOLOGY

Wherever humanoids sail upon the water, a living galleon can thrive. While its disguise fools most sailors, signs of a living galleon in a locale are difficult to miss. Mysteriously empty vessels, sailors vanishing without a trace, and frequent ghost ship sightings are all hints that a living galleon may be operating in an area. Once it has found a good hunting spot, living galleons are loath to leave, waiting patiently for months at a time for a good meal. While most living galleons do not comprehend language, they can communicate their intentions through changing their shape, and following patterns of social behavior proven to get good results. Some creatures can even befriend a living galleon by providing it with food, though such an arrangement is grisly indeed. Living galleons appear to have infinite lifespans, and continually increase in size as they feed. The oldest living galleons are hundreds, if not thousands of years old, and lose their ability to substantially change shape. Trapped in the form of a single ship, such creatures are legendary among seafaring races, and are among the most dangerous of their kind.

LIVING GALLEON

Titanic Monstrosity (shapechanger, 25 ft. wide by 80 ft long space, 50 ft. tall), neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points Special
Speed Special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	1 (-5)	22 (+6)	7 (-2)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +11, Wis +8
Skills Stealth +5, Perception +8, Deception +9
Damage Resistances fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Damage Immunities acid
Condition Immunities paralyzed, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 5 ft., darkvision 300 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages —
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Shapechanger. When the galleon finishes a long rest, it can assume the form of a naval vessel that is appropriate for its size. If the galleon takes no actions other than the Dash action, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary naval vessel. To facilitate this disguise, the galleon creates cargo, ropes, and other features typically found on a naval vessel. The galleon must always be in the shape of a naval vessel appropriate for its size and cannot be forced to revert to its "true" form by any means.

Sturdy Architecture. The galleon is both a creature and a structure.

Titanic Creature. The galleon is a titanic creature which is so large that combat involves dividing its body into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the galleon if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the galleons other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the galleon is slain, which causes the section to die along with the galleon. If a section has a speed, the galleon can move up to that section's speed during the section's turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the galleon, and the galleon cannot make opportunity attacks. Additionally, the galleon is immune to effects that would forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport it.

LIVING GALLEON – SAILS

Hit Points 108 (7d20+35)
Initiative 20
Speed 5 ft., swim 60 ft.

TRAITS

Bastion of Sight. Effects that would attempt to influence the galleon's sight (such as blinding or making eye contact with it) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is blinded, all other sections are as well.

Position. The sails of the galleon are at least 50 ft. above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 30 ft. wide, 40 ft. long, and 30 ft. deep.

ACTIONS

Lock On. The galleon focuses its gaze on a single object or creature it can see. Until the start of this section's next turn, the galleon has advantage on attack rolls against the creature for as long as it can see it.

Search. The galleon takes the Search action.

LIVING GALLEON – UPPER DECK

Hit Points 165 (10d20+60)
Initiative 15

TRAITS

Deck Access. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the Upper Deck can open or close up to two 10 ft. by 10 ft. holes on the deck's surface. Creatures in those areas when the holes open can take a reaction to attempt a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, moving to the edge of a hole on a success. Anything that falls through the hole enters the galleon's below decks section.

Position. The deck of the galleon is at least 20 ft. above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 25 ft. wide, and 80 ft. long.

Slippery Surface. The deck of the galleon is coated in a thin layer of saliva and is considered difficult terrain. When a creature standing on the deck spends movement for the first time on its turn, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The galleon makes two bone ballista attacks, or four tentacle rigging attacks. The galleon can forgo making one or more attacks in this manner to drag a creature it is grappling up to 20 ft.

Bone Ballista. *Range Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 300 ft./900 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Tentacle Rigging. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a creature, the galleon may grapple it (Escape DC 18).

LIVING GALLEON – CORE

Hit Points 217 (14d20+70)
Initiative 10

TRAITS

Bastion of the Mind. Effects that would attempt to influence the galleon's mind (such as psychic damage, the stunned and unconscious conditions, or effects that force an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned, or unconscious, all the other sections are as well.

Position. The Core section is a 10 ft. cube. The core of the galleon is at least 10 ft. above the space it occupies and is located somewhere within the Lower Deck section. The galleon can change the location of this section to somewhere within the Lower Decks section whenever it finishes a long rest.

Unified Being. At the start of each of the core's turns it can choose to lose up to 50 hit points and divide them amongst other sections of its choice.

Vulnerability. When this section is reduced to zero hit points, the galleon is slain. Additionally, this section takes double damage from all sources.

ACTIONS

Eviction. The galleon forces a creature standing upon or within it to succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be thrown 120 ft. directly away from the galleon. If this movement would be obstructed by the galleon's sections, a hole momentarily opens which allows the creature to pass through harmlessly, closing immediately afterward.

Monstrous Shaping. The galleon creates a wall of its own flesh on one of its sections. The wall can be up to 15 ft. high and 30 ft. long. The wall lasts until the Galleon chooses to dismiss it, but while in effect the galleon cannot be indistinguishable from an ordinary naval vessel.

LIVING GALLEON – LOWER DECK

Hit Points 165 (10d20+60)
Initiative 5

TRAITS

Digestive Juices. When a creature starts its turn within the Lower Deck, it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage.

No Way In/Out. Creatures and objects other than the galleon's appendages cannot enter the Lower Deck's space unless they pass through a hole in its structure. Anything within the Lower Deck's space has total cover against everything outside the space.

Position. The Lower Deck of the galleon is directly above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 25 ft. wide, 80 ft. long, and 20 ft. deep.

ACTIONS

Chew. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 0 ft., any number of targets within range. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Organic Pumps. The Lower Deck completely fills or empties of water. While filled with water, its Digestive Juices feature is suppressed.

LIVING KEEP

Slow as a snail and massive in size, a living keep is a magical mimic that takes on the guise of a haunted castle. Crawling across the landscape in the dead of night, a living keep positions itself on the edges of civilization, piquing the interests of adventurers, barons, and explorers looking to make a name for themselves. Each keep is unique in its design, chosen by the mimic to best integrate with the surrounding culture. Within its "halls" are bizarre organs that appear as traps, animated suits of armor to assault intruders, and a confusing maze of corridors. Living keeps are extraordinary deceptive, able to disguise the origin of every action and assault it commits. Most of their victims have succumbed without ever realizing what was truly responsible.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a living keep with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

LIVING KEEP LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	A living keep is almost impossible to recognize from the outside. Every action it takes is cunningly disguised to appear as though something else were responsible. Only careful investigation and attention to detail can confirm the presence of a living keep.
21	A living keep can only be slain if its Core is destroyed. Unfortunately, each keep conceals its Core deep within its structure. Its attacks take the form of common traps and hazards typically found in a dungeon.
25	Living keeps are garrisoned by a small army of animated armors, who can appear almost from thin air. A keep requires time to take down its prey and will attempt to keep intruders distracted by its many "traps" and guards. Don't be fooled by this tactic and make for the Core as swiftly as possible.

TACTICS

A living keep cannot be killed unless creatures venture inside and dispatch the core; frame combat strategy around this fact. Because it is resistant to all bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, a living keep is very difficult to dismantle from the outside. Those that attempt to do so must contend with the deadly Battlements section. The keep only resorts to fighting in this manner if enemies refuse to enter its body, as it's a lot of work to chase down prey when you move only 5 ft. a round. If the keep can maintain its disguise when prey enters its body, it will provide minor distractions in the form of animated armors, unleashing its "trap" style attacks intermittently. If all goes well, intruders should feel like they have entered a haunted castle rather than a living creature. Only if its prey attempts to leave will the mimic reveal its true nature and attack in full force. Note that even when attacking ferociously, the keep's Subtle Presence feature can prevent unobservant PCs from realizing what is happening.

The Living Keep

Every time I think I've seen it all, this world gets more determined to prove me wrong. My latest shocking experience was when I witnessed an entire fortress crawl across an open field in the dead of night. I quickly identified it as a member of the behemoth mimic family which had somehow acquired magical powers. This creature defies logical explanation. How does it know what kind of traps to mimic to fool adventurers? Why is its haunted castle disguise better than most actual haunted castles? I doubt an expert cast of bard actors could pull off a more convincing ruse than these "living keeps", who fool veteran adventurers and wet behind the ears neophytes with startling ease.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker
Favors: Clerics, Insight (High), Rangers, Teleportation, Wizards
Foils: Mobility (High), Range, Rogues, Sorcerers, Warlocks

LIVING KEEP

Titanic Monstrosity (shapechanger, 100 ft. by 100 ft. space, 40 ft. tall), neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points Special
Speed Special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	1 (-5)	24 (+7)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +11, Con +12, Int +5
Skills Perception +9, Deception +9
Damage Resistances fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Damage Immunities acid, poison
Condition Immunities paralyzed, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 5 ft., darkvision 300 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages —
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

TRAITS

Animated Garrison. The keep can fill its halls with a garrison of animated armor, generating them from its own body. When the keep finishes a short rest, it can generate ten animated armors, or twenty-five when it finishes a long rest. The keep can have up to fifty animated armors created in this fashion, which inhabit the keep's Halls section. If an animated armor ever moves farther than 500 ft. from the keep, it is destroyed instantly.

Shapechanger. When the keep finishes a long rest, it can assume the form of a castle that is appropriate for its size. In this state, the keep is indistinguishable from an ordinary castle. Each of the keeps sections is connected by a "door" that permits access between them and may be filled with a wide number of rooms and features befitting a castle. The keep must always be in the shape of a castle appropriate for its size and cannot be forced to revert to its "true" form by any means.

Sturdy Architecture. The keep is both a creature and a structure.

Subtle Presence. The keep has a passive Deception of 19 to conceal its true nature. When the keep takes actions or causes an effect that may betray its nature, a creature that observes the action or effect must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom (Insight) ability check, or attribute the action or effect to something that is not the keep's true nature (such as a trap, magical effect, or other source).

Titanic Creature. The keep is a titanic creature which is so large that combat involves dividing its body into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the keep if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the keep's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the keep is slain, which causes the section to die along with the keep. If a section has a speed, the keep can move up to that section's speed during the section's turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the keep, and the keep cannot make opportunity attacks. Additionally, the keep is immune to effects that would forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport it.

LIVING KEEP – BATTLEMENTS

Hit Points 192 (11d20 + 77)
Initiative 20
Speed 5 ft.

TRAITS

Bastion of Sight. Effects that would attempt to influence the keep's sight (such as blinding or making eye contact with it) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is blinded, all other sections are as well.

Position. The battlements of the keep are at least 40 ft. above the space it occupies. The section is approximately a 100 ft. by 100 ft. square.

ACTIONS

Catapult Volley (Recharge 5-6). The battlements launch three massive boulders at up to three spaces within 500 ft, no two of which can share of the same area. Creatures and Objects in the affected area must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 45 (10d8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. A successful saving throw halves this damage and prevents the prone condition. Objects not being worn or carried, and structures take double damage from this effect.

Focus Energy. The Battlement's turn ends, and the Halls section immediately takes a turn.

Hail of Arrows. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, 150 ft./600 ft. Any number of targets within range. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Spotlight. The battlements emit a beam of bright light 15 ft. wide and 500 ft. long for 1 minute. Creatures within the beam cannot be invisible and have their vision reduced to 5 ft. If a creature inside the area of the beam attempts to move out of it, the keep can choose to follow its movement with the beam, keeping the creature within the area if the creature remains with 500 ft. of the keep.

Easier Tactics – As soon as the PCs enter the keep, roll initiative. The keep will have it's animated armors patrol its Hall's section, never operating in groups greater than four. It will attempt to bait the PCs by revealing its Core location, with a dozen or so animated armors waiting in ambush as soon as the first PC steps through the door.

Harder Tactics – Force the PCs to explore the keep's layout. As soon as one character leaves the sightline of the other, hit it with an attack from the Hall's section, giving the keep surprise. This will only allow the character that experienced the effect to roll against the keep's Subtle Presence feature, rather than the whole party. Once the PCs are deep within the keep's structure, unleash hell. Use Crushing Walls, hordes of animated armors, and merciless targeted attacks to down weak PCs and prevent escape. Don't roll initiative until the PCs discover the keep is a creature or are attacking animated armors.

LIVING KEEP – HALLS

Hit Points 315 (18d20 + 126)
Initiative 15

TRAITS

No Way In/Out. Creatures and objects other than the keep's appendages cannot enter the Hall's space unless they pass through a hole in its structure. Anything within the Hall's space has total cover against everything outside the space.

Position. The halls of the keep are directly above the space it occupies. The section is a 100 ft. by 100 ft. cube approximately 40 ft. tall.

Regeneration. At the start of each of the hall's turns, it regains 30 hit points. This effect ends when the keep is slain.

Stalking Walls (1/turn). When the halls deal damage to a creature, it may deal an additional 28 (8d6) damage.

ACTIONS

Crushing Walls (1/Short or Long Rest). The walls of the halls crash together in a 30 ft. cube within the hall's space. Creatures within the area must attempt a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, moving the edge of the area on a success. On a failure, a creature takes 33 (6d10) bludgeoning damage and are knocked unconscious until the start of its next turn.

Fire Arrow Trap. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, range 30 ft./ 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 6) piercing and 11 (2d8) fire.

Spike Trap. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 0 ft., each creature in a 10 ft. square on the floor of the halls. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Toxic Gas. The 30 ft. cube section of the Halls are flooded with toxic gas for 1 hour. When a creature enters the area of the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must attempt a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 26 (4d12) poison damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

PLOT HOOKS

Treachery At The Castle Upon A Mountain. The mayor of a large city has renovated a large castle atop a mountain just outside of town, with the intention of hosting a grand gala for his political rivals as a peace offering. In reality, the castle is a slumbering living keep, and the gala is an elaborate trap to assassinate all of the mayor's enemies in one fell swoop. Naturally, the PCs receive an invitation.

The House Of Silence. A powerful death knight commands a living keep as a mobile fortress, with a legion of undead housed within. The undead are unpalatable to the mimic, and the death knight provides a steady stream of humanoids in return for the keep's services.

It Belongs In a Museum. A powerful artifact lost to time is believed to be housed within an ancient behemoth mimic hibernating atop a snowy peak. Archeologists plan to mount an expedition but need some decent muscle in case the behemoth mimic awakens from its starvation-induced slumber.

TREASURE

Living keeps need a fair amount of wealth to maintain their disguise, collecting a hoard of treasure over their near-infinite lifespans. This treasure is placed strategically throughout its structure, with hopes of luring explorers deeper into the mimic's maze of hallways and corridors. One room may be a banquet hall glistening with jeweled cutlery, while another an armory filled with mithril weaponry. In addition to this treasure, a living keep's core generates an extraordinary gem for reasons yet unknown. Known as a crownstone, these gems are nearly a foot in diameter and are a deep, blood red, smoldering with a fiery light. They are prized by royalty for their capacity to be carved into elaborate jewelry made of solid gemstone and are typically auctioned for over 100,000 gp a gem.

ECOLOGY

Living keeps are far too conspicuous for civilized society. Unless its feeds on at least a dozen humanoids a year, it will quickly starve, entering a period of hibernation until food becomes available. Living keeps can remain in this state for centuries before succumbing and take at least a month to fully awaken. In the meantime, communities may form around its structure, providing the keep with a reliable source of food. All it takes is a handful of curious adventurers exploring the local abandoned castle to stir its slumber. Once active, a living keep is a cunning, patient predator. It will often allow survivors of expeditions to escape, returning to tell stories of haunted corridors and wonderous treasures. If its true nature is revealed to the world at large, the keep flees the locale in the dead of night, trundling across the landscape. During this time, it will reshape into a new form, adapting its architecture to reflect the first culture it comes across. Undead and other inedible creatures may find a welcome home within a living keep, just as long as they don't blow its cover or take its food.

LIVING KEEP – CORE

Hit Points 210 (12d20 + 84)
Initiative 10

TRAITS

Bastion of the Mind. Effects that would attempt to influence the keep's mind (such as psychic damage, the stunned and unconscious conditions, or effects that force an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned, or unconscious, all the other sections are as well.

Hidden. The core is magically hidden within the body of the keep and cannot be found without great effort. Creatures wishing to locate the core must search through the keep's Halls section. At the end of each of its turns, a creature within the Hall's section may attempt a DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) ability check, coming closer to deducing the Core's exact location on a success. Once a creature (or group of creatures that are sharing the results of their efforts) have succeed on three checks made in this manner, the location of the core and the shortest path to it is revealed. Any attempt to locate the core in a manner other than this method automatically fails, unless the attempt comes from an effect of a spell of 8th level or higher. At its discretion, the keep can also allow a creature to find its core.

No Way In/Out. Creatures and objects other than the keep's appendages cannot enter the Core's space unless they pass through a hole in its structure. Anything within the Core's space has total cover against everything outside the space.

Position. The Core section is a 25 ft. cube in the shape of a throne room. The core of the keep is located somewhere within the Hall's section. The keep can change the location of this section to somewhere within the Halls section whenever it finishes a long rest.

Vulnerability. When this section is reduced to zero hit points, the keep is slain. Additionally, this section takes double damage from all sources.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The core makes two carpet tongue attacks.

Carpet Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 25 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d12 + 6) bludgeoning and 14 (4d6) acid.

Donate Life. The core can choose to lose up to 50 hit points and divide them amongst other sections of its choice.

Focus Energy. The Core's turn ends, and the Halls section immediately takes a turn.

Guards! The core magically teleports up to six animated armors it has created to unoccupied spaces within 10 ft. of it.

LIVING MAGE TOWER

The bizarre product of a mimic consuming the spellbook of an archmage, the living mage tower is a mighty magical creature with a fearsome arsenal of spells. Taking the disguise of a magical tower, these mimics are extremely intelligent, much to the detriment of their favorite prey: humanoids. On the inside a living mage tower is a strange mix of magic, monster, and building. Its body parts are shielded by mighty spell wards while strange arcane phenomena prevent access to its upper levels. The mimic even speaks, pretending to be a mad wizard slinging spells from the tower's loft and antagonizing arrogant adventurers with stinging insults to their intelligence.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a living mage tower with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

LIVING MAGE TOWER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Living mage towers are powerfully magical and can cast spells. These mimics behave like typical mad wizards, making it almost impossible to verify its presence until you are inside it.
24	With a huge array of spells at its disposal and a formidable intelligence, a living mage tower can overwhelm its prey while they are still trying to figure out what is happening. It can produce spells from any part of its body, but the most fearsome ones come from its core, found at the top of the tower.
28	A living mage tower is a paragon of magical combat. If you are thinking of blowing it up from long range, don't. Pretending to fall for its ruse will force the mimic to hold back until you are close, preventing it from using its most powerful spells.

TACTICS

Take note of the tower's impressive spell list. There are some real heavy hitters there, including *meteor swarm*, *prismatic wall*, *feeblemind*, *maze*, *forcecage*, *mass suggestion* and *polymorph*. Chances are if the mimic wanted to kill the PCs long before they got close, it could (the range on *meteor swarm* is 1 mile). With its ability to cast three spells in a round between all its sections, the tower can lay down an impressive amount of hurt in a very short period. Refrain from spamming these powerhouse spells back to back, as the mimic wants its prey to get close. The mimic should pretend to be an ornery wizard, screaming insulting obscenities at the PCs and hurling low impact spells to draw them in. Once the PCs have entered the Atrium or Winding Staircase, unleash the more potent effects, damaging the mimic in the process if necessary.

Easier Tactics – Avoid preparing the tower with spells like *guards and wards* and *symbol*. Use more subtle magical effects such as *hallucinatory terrain* and *phantasmal force* to disorient and confuse, rather than outright

kill. Play up the craziness of the supposed "mad wizard" lurking within, with irrational decisions and suboptimal maneuvers by the tower.

Harder Tactics – As soon as the PCs get within 500 ft. of the tower (within range of its Magical Defenses feature) open fire. The mimic should have powerful spells set up in advance of the encounter and use effects like *mass suggestion* to compel the party into making poor decisions. The tower has more than enough spell slots for almost any strategy, so don't be stingy.

PLOT HOOKS

Wanted: Wizard's Apprentice, No Experience Necessary. A magical tower has appeared in the town square overnight. Its resident, the High Magus of the Very Big Deal Arcanum Society has promised to make an apprentice out of the first one to climb to the top of the tower. While the common folk are easily fooled by this ruse, the shrewder members of the town are skeptical.

The Doom Tower. A living mage tower has been mounted on tracks and is being utilized as a magical weapon of war. Known as the Doom Tower, the mimic has proven to be a nigh unstoppable force on the battlefield, but with no loyalty beyond its next meal.

The Upside-Down Spire. Deep beneath the earth is the legendary home of a dread necromancer. Said to be suspended from the ceiling in a great cavern, the spire is sought by all manner of evil spellcasters looking to master forbidden arts. In response, a good deity has promised its blessing to whomever can destroy the spire and rid the world of one more evil. Little does everyone realize the spire is a cunning trap left by the necromancer before he died; a living mage tower.

TREASURE

The power of a living mage tower allows it to collect an impressive number of valuables. To better facilitate its disguise, the tower will collect things wizards love: books, chemistry sets, beard grooming kits, etc. These mimics often choose to imitate famous wizards in cultural history, and in some instances may possess artifacts from those same wizards. A typical living mage tower will possess at least one of the following items; *staff of power*, *robe of the archmagi*, *Ioun stone of mastery*, *ring of spell turning*, or a *manual of golems* (*iron*). Additionally, there is typically a selection of spell scrolls, with a combined spell level no higher than 30.

Additionally, if a *staff of the magi* is within the core of the living mage tower when it is slain, the magic of the creature is transferred to the staff, granting it the following benefits (in additional to its normal properties).

Artifact Power. The staff becomes an *artifact*, and gains one major beneficial property, two minor beneficial properties, and one major detrimental property (rolled randomly, at the DM's discretion, or of the DM's design).

Critical Blast. While you hold the staff, your spell attacks score a critical hit on an attack roll of 19 or 20.

Mighty Magic. While you are attuned to the staff you gain a 10th level spell slot, which is considered a class spell slot for you. This slot can only be used to cast spells at higher levels. If this slot is expended, you regain it whenever you finish a long rest.

ECOLOGY

Because of their *teleport* spell, living mage towers can be found anywhere there are humanoids. They rarely stay still for long, lingering just long enough to feed before moving on to more unsuspecting locales. The creatures seem drawn to areas of magical activity, and when given the choice always prefer spellcasters as a meal. When not on the hunt, living mage towers are surprisingly communicative. They will happily hold conversation with other creatures, so long as doing so does not reveal its true nature. They are shockingly ignorant about magic, especially when considering their abilities. To a living mage tower, its spellcasting is pure instinct, and a minor curiosity at best. The mimics prefer information about the cultures and lore of humanoids, using a familiar as a scout to gather information. Because of their unique magical defenses and easily bought loyalty, living mage towers are sought by warlords and powerful spell casters as weapons and lairs.

The Living Mage Tower

I asked Archmagister King why wizards have such an obsession with towers. His answer of "isn't it obvious?" was maddeningly unhelpful. Whatever the reason, these mimics seem to understand the minds of wizards, for their disguise is by far the most convincing of the behemoth strain. The magic at these creature's disposal is formidable. Each possesses enough firepower to level a small city, let alone a party of intrepid adventurers. They are also far more mobile than their lesser counterparts, teleporting vast distances in an instance in search of gullible prey. Everything about these creatures screams overkill to me. Their strength far outclasses their need to feed on a dozen or so humanoids a year. Theory: the mimic either enjoys inflicting suffering (unlikely) or can only receive meaningful sustenance from powerful "food"

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Artillery

Favors: Antimagic, Bards, Insight (High), Sorcerers, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Paladins, Range, Rangers

LIVING MAGE TOWER

Titanic Monstrosity (shapechanger, 30 ft. by 30 ft. square, 200 ft. tall), neutral

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points Special
Speed Special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	1 (-5)	23 (+6)	26 (+8)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +12, Int +14, Wis +11
Skills Stealth +7, Arcana +14, Perception +11, Deception +14
Damage Resistances fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Damage Immunities acid
Condition Immunities paralyzed, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses blindsight 5 ft., darkvision 300 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common
Challenge 19 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Magical Defenses. The area in and around the tower in a 500 ft. radius is protected by powerful defensive magic. Attempts by creatures other than the tower to magically teleport automatically fail, and creatures cannot fly with the aid of magic.

Additionally, the tower takes half damage from everything outside of the tower (in addition to its damage resistances and immunities).

Shapechanger. When the tower finishes a long rest, it can assume the form of a magical tower that is appropriate for its size. In this state it is indistinguishable from an "ordinary" magical tower. To facilitate this disguise, the tower creates libraries, chemistry labs, and other features typically found within a mage's tower. The tower must always be in the shape of a magical tower appropriate for its size and cannot be forced to revert to its "true" form by any means.

Spellcasting. The tower is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 22, +14 to hit with spell attacks. The tower has the following spells prepared, requiring no verbal, somatic, or material components.

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast, firebolt, mage hand*
1st level (6 slots): *alarm, find familiar, magic missile*
2nd level (5 slots): *darkness, hold person, magic aura, phantasmal force*
3rd level (5 slots): *counterspell, dispel magic, fireball, glyph of warding*
4th level (4 slots): *hallucinatory terrain, polymorph, wall of fire*
5th level (4 slots): *animate objects, cloudkill, telekinesis*
6th level (3 slots): *chain lightning, guards and wards, mass suggestion*
7th level (3 slots): *firestorm, forcecage, symbol, teleport*
8th level (2 slots): *control weather, freeblemind, maze*
9th level (2 slots): *meteor swarm, prismatic wall*

Sturdy Architecture. The tower is both a creature and a structure.

Subtle Presence. The tower has a passive Deception of 24 to conceal its true nature. When the tower takes actions or acts in a manner that may betray its nature, a creature not aware of the tower's nature that can detect this action must succeed on a DC 24 Wisdom (Insight) ability check, or attribute the effect to something that is not the tower's true nature (such as a trap, magical effect, or other source).

Titanic Creature. The tower is a titanic creature which is so large that combat involves dividing its body into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the tower if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the tower's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the tower is slain, which causes the section to die along with the tower. If a section has a speed, the tower can move up to that section's speed during the section's turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the tower, and the tower cannot make opportunity attacks. Additionally, attempts to forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport the tower or any of its parts automatically fails.

LIVING MAGE TOWER – ATRIUM

Hit Points 247 (15d20+90)
Initiative 20
Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

TRAITS

Mystic Seal. The atrium of the tower conceals the entrance to the Winding Staircase section behind a magical seal that prevents any physical passage. Once the atrium has been reduced to zero hit points, the seal dissipates for 24 hours.

No Way In/Out. Creatures and objects other than the tower's appendages cannot enter the Atrium's space unless they pass through a hole in its structure. Anything within the Atrium's space has total cover against everything outside the space.

Position. The atrium is positioned at the bottom of the tower. The section is a cube with a 30 ft. square base that is 15 ft. tall.

ACTIONS

Multicantrip. The atrium casts two cantrips

Arcane Maw. *Melee Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d12+8) force damage. If the target is a creature, it can expend a spell slot of 6th level or lower to deal an additional 6 (1d12) force damage per level of the spell slot expended.

Cast a spell. The atrium casts a spell of 3rd level or lower.

Focus Energy. The Atrium's turn ends, and another section immediately takes a turn.

LIVING MAGE TOWER – WINDING STAIRCASE

Hit Points 165 (17d20+60)
Initiative 15

TRAITS

Infinite Staircase. A creature that ascends to the top of the Winding Staircase section magically appears at the bottom of the staircase. This effect ends for 24 hours if no creatures in the staircase spend any movement for an entire round.

No Way In/Out. Creatures and objects other than the tower's appendages cannot enter the staircases' space unless they pass through a hole in its structure. Anything within the staircases' space has total cover against everything outside the space.

Position. The staircase is 15 ft. above the space the tower occupies. The section is a 30 ft. square that is 165 ft. tall.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Staircase casts two cantrips or makes two tapestry tendril attacks.

Cast a spell. The Staircase casts a spell of 6th level or lower.

Focus Energy. The Staircases' turn ends, and another section immediately takes a turn.

Tapestry Tendril. *Melee Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 165 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) slashing damage and the target is pulled 50 ft. up toward the top of the staircase.

LIVING MAGE TOWER – CORE

Hit Points 279 (18d20+108)
Initiative 10

TRAITS

Bastion of the Mind. Effects that would attempt to influence the tower's mind (such as psychic damage, the stunned and unconscious conditions, or effects that force an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned, or unconscious, all the other sections are as well.

No Way In/Out. Creatures and objects other than the tower's appendages cannot enter the Core's space unless they pass through a hole in its structure. Anything within the Core's space has total cover against everything outside the space.

Position. The Core section is a 30 ft. square that is 20 ft. high. The core of the tower is at least 180 ft. above the space the tower occupies.

Vulnerability. When this section is reduced to zero hit points, the tower is slain. Additionally, this section takes double damage from all sources inside of its space.

ACTIONS

Multicantrip. The core casts three cantrips

Cast a spell. The core casts a spell of 9th level or lower.

Focus Energy. The core's turn ends, and another section immediately takes a turn.

Recover Magic (Recharge 5-6). The core recovers expended spell slots of combined level less than or equal to nine.

Birds of Paradise

The fey creatures known as birds of paradise are sinister beings who subjugate humanoids with their magical songs. While they are rarely lethal, these beautiful creatures are the reason experienced adventures carry a set of earplugs. Each species is a magnificent specimen, a cunning disguise to lure in unsuspecting creatures. The song of a bird of paradise is hauntingly beautiful. Its otherworldly melodies possess disturbing magical properties that can lay low an entire adventuring party. A bird of paradise can only reproduce when nesting upon the heads of humanoids, preferably in a state induced by their magical melodies. This process produces a single offspring over the course of a year in a life cycle too bizarre to have been conceived naturally. More than a few isolated villages have had community members go missing only to wander out of the woods years later with tales of "demon birds" wielding deceptive fairy magic.

The Royal Crooning Spellwing

One would think that, as a bard, I could appreciate a musical monster such as the spellwing. Wrong. These creatures pervert the magical power of music to malicious ends that almost always prove disastrous for local innocents. While they themselves do not kill, spellwings have a malicious streak. They know full well most humanoids cannot afford to lose years of their lives, and the magnificent beard one grows over the course of a spellwing's magically induced slumber is small consolation for a lost lifetime. I've witnessed a spellwing magically influence a great many creatures at once, forcing a simple farming community to serve the bird's interests over their own. The "disciples of song," I believe they called themselves, a most pitiable faction who could not be saved.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Bards, Charmed (Protection from), Clerics, Druids, Paladins

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Mobility (Low), Perception (Low), Rangers, Rogues, Spellcasters (Lack of)

ROYAL CROONING SPELLWING

Resembling a flamboyant and fantastical tropical bird, the royal crooning spellwing is the most common of the birds of paradise, with an enchanting song that can induce slumber in hapless creatures for years at a time. Victims of the spellwing usually return home alive, though rarely pleased at being effectively "kidnapped" for a year. The spellwing prefers to nest upon the heads of the elderly. It is said the birds know the old have less of a life to lose. However, a band of adventurers will do in a pinch, and the spellwing has more than enough magical abilities to handle most would-be heroes. When not seeking a suitable host upon which to nest, spellwings are visibly mischievous, putting on elaborate displays for birdwatchers and being as loud as possible in public spaces. The birds are exceptionally vain and egocentric and thrive upon attention in any form. Communities near a spellwing's territory can expect to encounter the creature with alarming frequency and be subjected to its magic without their consent. However, the bird is clever enough to not drive off its neighbors, keeping its levels of obnoxiousness barely below intolerable.

LORE

A character can learn information about a royal crooning spellwing by making an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

ROYAL CROONING SPELLWING LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	All birds of paradise sing magical songs. It is wise to cover one's ears before seeking one out, but don't expect that to always work. Creatures sleeping in peculiar places are always a sign a spellwing is nearby.
21	Only those with the strongest wills can resist a spellwing's songs. The creature is also difficult to find, possessing illusory magic and a frightful intellect. While not deadly, defeat by a spellwing is a disaster for any adventuring party.
25	Spellwings can induce magical slumber in creatures for up to a year, and they nest upon the heads of those they overcome. It can visit the dreams of its victims and enchant them with powerful magic to protect and serve it.

TACTICS

A spellwing does not need to fight to win a battle, and it knows it. The bird uses its illusion magic to confuse and disorient its victims while they slowly succumb to its song. A spellwing is often heard long before it is seen, its voice carrying an impressive distance depending on the terrain. Against foes well prepared for its trickery, the bird will use *suggestion* to



BIRDS OF PARADISE

force them to keep their ears uncovered. Creatures that have intentionally deafened themselves are of no interest to a spellwing, which avoids them at all costs.

Easier Tactics — The spellwing should make its presence known, beginning combat fully visible and within range of most ranged attacks and spells. It should stay low to the ground, using cover to avoid most ranged attacks but never fleeing the battlefield. When gravely injured, the bird will stop singing and flee as quickly as possible.

Harder Tactics — An adventuring party would be lucky to ever see a cunning spellwing and encounter it long before coming into range. Use *greater invisibility* coupled with *suggestion* to keep party members confused and unaware of the bird's presence. If the bird has ample time to prepare, it should use *seeming* to appear like a harmless local bird, attacking with surprise should the party fall for its ruse. Characters that cover their ears should be charmed and ordered to uncover them.

PLOT HOOKS

Unwanted Guest. A small-town church has been taken over by a royal crooning spellwing, which has taken a liking to the building's elaborate rookery. The town's homeless are taken to the church as an offering to prevent the bird from targeting the more affluent members of society.

Highway Robbery. A band of marauding fey are using a spellwing to capture and enslave humanoids traveling through an ancient forest. With more than a hundred souls lost already, the road through the forest has been closed until the threat is removed.

Terrible Tenant. A spellwing has taken a particular interest in one of the characters, believing that if it nests upon that character's head it will sire its finest offspring to date. What starts as obnoxious requests turns to harassment and assault as the bird loses patience.

TREASURE

Spellwing feathers are beautiful and highly prized as magical reagents and fashion accessories. An intact body of a spellwing can provide up to twenty high-quality feathers, each of which is worth 500 gp. A spellwing feather can be used as an extra material component to an illusion spell, which is always consumed when the spell is cast. When used in this manner, creatures with truesight cannot automatically detect the effects of the illusion nor do they automatically succeed on saving throws against it, instead making saving throws against the effect at advantage.

ECOLOGY

A royal crooning spellwing lives near humanoids by necessity. Though it prefers tropical climates, a spellwing will go to great lengths to find an amble supply of fresh heads upon which to nest. Once a spellwing has set up shop, it will proceed to influence everything around it with its charming song. This has the dual benefit of making allies of the local wildlife and manipulating local populations into tolerating its presence. The bird

ROYAL CROONING SPELLWING

Small fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 150 (20d6 + 80)
Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	23 (+6)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +7, Cha +10
Skills Arcana +8, Insight +7, Nature +12, Performance +14
Damage Resistances psychic, thunder
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Enchanting Song. When a creature that can hear the spellwing starts its turn, the spellwing can force it to attempt a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw if the spellwing isn't incapacitated. A creature that fails the saving throw is charmed by the spellwing for 1 minute.

Unless surprised, a creature can cover its ears to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it is deafened until the start of its next turn and cannot use any limbs it is using to cover its ears. If a creature has its ears uncovered in the meantime, it must immediately attempt the saving throw.

Eternal Slumber. If a creature fails three saving throws against the spellwing's Enchanting Song in 1 minute, it immediately falls unconscious for 1 year. During this time, the creature does not need to eat or drink, effectively hibernating. This effect can be ended early by the *greater restoration*, *heal*, *or wish* spells.

Innate Spellcasting. The spellwing's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *charm person*, *greater invisibility*, *minor illusion*, *suggestion*
1/day each: *dream*, *geas*, *seeming*

Truesight Suppression. If a creature charmed by the spellwing has truesight, it is suppressed for the duration of the condition.

ACTIONS

Grand Performance (Recharge 10 Minutes). For 1 minute, the spellwing amplifies its voice to resonate across tremendous distances. The spellwing can be clearly heard by creatures up to 1 mile away, and the range of the spellwing's spells and magical effects increases to 1 mile. The spellwing must concentrate (as though it were a spell) to maintain these effects for the duration.

REACTIONS

Threat Display. When the spellwing is attacked by a creature it can see, it can take a reaction to display its plumage in a threatening manner to impose disadvantage on the attack roll. If the attack misses, the spellwing may take an additional reaction after the end of that turn. This reaction is lost when the spellwing starts its next turn.

is so loud and flamboyant that even the dullest of creatures can avoid its territory if necessary. However, a spellwing will go to great lengths to hide its nesting grounds, luring humanoids to hidden vales or other concealed locales before finally putting them to sleep.

SWORD-BILLED STONE SINGER

A large, steel-feathered crane with a beak as sharp as a rapier, the sword-billed stone singer is a rightfully feared bird of paradise with a song that can turn its victims to stone. While not as conventionally attractive as the other birds, it makes up for it with pure spite and deadly abilities. Stone singers seeks out attractive humanoids as its preferred victims. These individuals make for the finest statues upon which the bird rears its young, a grim fate for any who dare underestimate its unassuming appearance. The stone singer also attacks out of contempt, particularly if unattractive individuals wander into its territory. Obsessive and meticulous, a stone singer seeks to turn its territory in a picturesque oasis of beauty. Petrified creatures are often reshaped by the bird's magic, twisted into more artful shapes. This habit has devastating consequences for a creature restored to its natural state. The sight of deformed and unnatural-shaped locals are a good indicator they have suffered the wrath of a nearby stone singer.

LORE

A character can learn information about a sword-billed stone singer by making an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

SWORD-BILLED STONE SINGER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Stone singers are evil and malicious. While you can expect to survive an encounter with other birds of paradise, that is not the case with the dreaded stone singer.
20	Once a stone singer has petrified a creature, it often shapes and carves its body into a more aesthetically pleasing shape. Those unlucky enough to survive this mutilation are forever disfigured if they are restored to their natural state.
25	Stone singers have power over the land itself, able to generate earthquakes and shape stone. They can even hide within the earth itself and readily do so to escape any threat too tough to handle.

A STONE SINGER'S ARTISTIC LICENSE

Unless extraordinarily attractive, a creature petrified by a stone stinger can expect some "adjustments" carved into its body by the bird's sharp beak or by its *stone shape* spell. The tastes of each stone singer vary greatly but rarely align with conventional perceptions of attractiveness among humanoids. See the Stone Singer Artistic Alterations table for some examples.

The Sword-Billed Stone Singer

That poor girl. Once we had slain the stone singer and freed the maiden from that eternal prison, her face was so mangled her own family did not recognize their own. Ionia spent weeks putting her back together, using every ounce of her healing skills to undo the horrific damage that damned bird had committed for its own twisted amusements. These creatures deal only in cruelty, caring nothing for their victims.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Antimagic, Bards, Clerics, Constitution (High), Sorcerers, Wizards

Foils: Fighters, Mobility (Low), Paladins, Perception (Low), Warlocks

STONE SINGER ARTISTIC ALTERATIONS

D6	DESCRIPTION
1	The victim's skin is carved with bizarre scars resembling tree leaves.
2	The victim's fingertips, ears, toes, and nose are carved off.
3	The victim's hands and feet are switched. Right is now left, and left is now right.
4	The victim's knees and elbows are hinged to instead bend the opposite direction.
5	The victim's spine follows an "S" curve.
6	The victim's face is flipped upside down.

TACTICS

Stone singers are aggressive and cunning, immediately attacking any creature they deem a threat or that would make an interesting statue. The bird is fond of hiding within the earth to better ambush its victims. Creatures that cover their ears in preparation for a stone singer will have their protections stripped by the bird's *telekinesis*. In preparation for a battle a stone singer will often deform the terrain to better advantage its small size, creating tunnels, narrow passageways, and other obstacles that foil larger enemies.

Easier Tactics — The stone singer will not have manipulated its environment to its advantage. Additionally, the bird will rarely concentrate on two effects at once (preferably its *telekinesis* spell) over more powerful effects such as *earthquake*. The bird will rarely hide, doing so only when grievously wounded.

Harder Tactics — The stone singer casts *pass without trace* as soon as it becomes aware of a threat and then hides. With a +11 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks, the bird will make every effort to hide until it can use its song to the best effect. A combination of *telekinesis* and *earthquake* can push enemies into fissures. As the DM, you have discretion over whether the *earthquake* spell creates fissures, so make several to increase the stone singer's difficulty. A creature that falls or is pushed into a fissure can be sealed in by *stone shape* while the bird deals with its allies.

PLOT HOOKS

Stone Warden. A sword-billed stone singer has taken up residence in the governor's castle dungeon, using its magic to hide within the walls and petrify prisoners. The governor is willing to turn a blind eye to the creature, but the locals are growing increasingly concerned by the situation.

Symbiotic Relationship. A tribe of deaf elves has lived within a forest populated by stone singers for centuries. Immune to the bird's magical songs, the elves use them as a buffer and live out their lives in peace, a status quo threatened by a bounty placed upon stone singers by a nearby ranger conclave.

Tough Love. A tyrannical overlord keeps a pet stone singer, using it to petrify and disfigure her husbands when they grow too tiresome. The nearby kingdoms, tired of seeing their princes mutilated, want the bird stolen so the tyrant will honor her commitments in a more civilized manner.

TREASURE

A stone singer has no need of treasure, but its petrifying song leads to many statues adorned with finery scattered about its territory. Because of its tastes, the bird's victims are often well-dressed, wealthy individuals who can afford to put aesthetics before practicality. Jewelry, fine clothes, and other fare typically found in the possession of nobles are among these items in quantities according to the wealth of the local populace.

ECOLOGY

Stone singers don't do well in open areas. The birds prefer territories of stone and earth which best complement their abilities. These environments become distinctly artificial, as the stone singer's obsessive artistic tendencies compel it to sculpt each stone into bizarre shapes. Combined with the petrified bodies of its victims, a stone singer's territory becomes a perverse museum of stone, disturbing travelers and local wildlife alike. Because a stone singer cannot compel humanoids to enter its territory, it will always choose a location well-traveled as its domain. This inevitably causes massive headaches for those affected, as only violence can compel a stone singer to leave, and even then, unless killed, the bird will eventually return.

SWORD-BILLED STONE SINGER

Small fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 180(23d6 + 100)
Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +10, Wis +9
Skills Athletics +12, Insight +14, Nature +8, Perception +9, Performance +18, Stealth +11
Damage Resistances acid, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Focused Mind. The stone singer has advantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration and can concentrate on up to two effects at a time.

Innate Spellcasting. The stone singer's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *meld into stone*, *pass without trace*, *stone shape*, *telekinesis*
1/day each: *earthquake*, *transmute rock*†

Petrifying Song. When a creature that can hear the stone singer starts its turn, the stone singer can force it to attempt a DC 21 Constitution saving throw if the stone singer isn't incapacitated. A creature that fails the saving throw is restrained until the start of its next turn, as its flesh begins to harden. If a creature fails three saving throws against this effect within 24 hours, it is permanently petrified. If a creature succeeds on three saving throws against this effect within 24 hours, the creature is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Unless surprised, a creature can cover its ears to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it is deafened until the start of its next turn and cannot use any limbs it is using to cover its ears. If a creature hears the stone singer in the meantime, it must immediately attempt the saving throw.

ACTIONS

Stunning Shriek (Recharge 5–6). The stone singer emits a shriek of incredible intensity. Each creature within 60 feet of the stone singer must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. A stunned creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

REACTIONS

Sound of Mind. When the stone singer fails an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, it can take a reaction to succeed instead.

†This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*.

GOLDEN EMPEROR'S LYREBIRD

Resembling a canary of pure gold, the golden emperor's lyrebird is a fey of genius intellect and unfathomable cunning. Its small size hides incredible power, as the bird unleashes potent magic to make even the most experienced wizard envious. These creatures are mercifully rare, as their powerful songs can banish creatures to the fey realm until their dying days. Even more disturbing is the bird's preference for the heads of children as ideal nesting grounds. A lyrebird is disturbingly adept at deception, able to lure creatures to their doom with unsettling ease. Few creatures can recognize the presence of a lyrebird in their locale, often attributing the numerous disappearances to far less subtle creatures lurking nearby.

LORE

A character can learn information about a golden emperor's lyrebird by making an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

GOLDEN EMPEROR'S LYREBIRD LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	A golden emperor's lyrebird is a master of deception. It is said it can mimic any sound it has heard before, and its magic is potent.
23	A lyrebird looks identical to a canary with golden plumage. Combined with its small size, this makes the bird hard to detect until it is too late. If you are in a lyrebird's territory, trust nothing that you hear.
28	The golden lyrebird can make a *wish* when in dire straits. It can only do so once every century, but its wishes are always catastrophic for its enemies. Lyrebirds nest upon the heads of their victims in a hidden forest of trees within the fey realm. Called the Grove of the Lost, those banished by lyrebirds are almost always sent there.

TACTICS

Combat with a golden emperor's lyrebird is a unique experience. The fey is almost always able to surprise its foes, unleashing its banishing song before they have a chance to respond. Any remaining creatures are subjected to *command* to keep their ears uncovered, with an entire adventuring party imprisoned upon the fey realm in a few short rounds. Magical defenses provide little protection as they are efficiently dispelled and subsequent spell casts countered. If the battle turns against the lyrebird, it will gladly disengage to fight another day, particularly if it already has a victim imprisoned in the fey realm.

Easier Tactics — The bird makes no attempt to attack with surprise, nor does it start combat under the effects of *foresight* and *telepathy*. This keeps the battle on relatively even terms as covering one's ears proves highly effective against the magical song of the lyrebird. While still vulnerable to the *command* spell, the lyrebird should focus more on hiding and running than ordering targets to uncover their ears.

The Golden Emperor's Lyrebird

All fey creatures are capricious and deceptive by nature, but the golden emperor's lyrebird elevates this to an art form. Even after encountering the bird, I struggled to trust what my eyes saw and my ears heard. So impressive is the creature's ability to replicate anything it hears that it can deceive the most experienced con artists. Just when I thought I understood its capabilities the lyrebird demonstrated another extraordinary feat. It is with regret that I admit my own shortcomings in researching this creature and qualify what you read here as mere supposition rather than concrete fact. The risks were simply too great. Too many magical defenses, and the bird would not appear. Too few, and I risked an eternity imprisoned upon another plane. No amount of knowledge is worth tempting such a fate.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Controller
Favors: Antimagic, Bards, Clerics, Druids, Charisma (High), Wizards
Foils: Barbarians, Charisma (Low), Paladins, Perception (Low), Warlocks

Harder Tactics — The bird prepares for combat by casting *telepathy* and *foresight*. It uses *telepathy* to hear the surface thoughts of creatures then pretends to be those surface thoughts by projecting its voice inside their skulls, rolling Charisma (Deception) ability checks to pull off the ruse. It will attempt to trick characters into splitting up before attacking with surprise, preventing them from covering their ears. It will also layer the environment in illusions to better conceal itself and separate enemies. Any creatures lucky enough to be active after a few rounds are easily defeated from a safe hiding place.

PLOT HOOKS

Lost Generation. The emperor's children have disappeared one by one over the course of several years. Driven mad by grief, the emperor neglects his kingdom and takes comfort in his extravagant bird collection, claiming that only they truly understand him. All attempts to magically cure the madness have failed, leading those trying to keep the empire together suspecting "fowl" play.

Feathered Intrigue. A fey queen uses a lyrebird as a court assassin. The bird's masterful subterfuge and stealth allow it to banish its victims

directly into the queen's dungeons. Paranoid fey nobles begin offering extravagant rewards to any who believe they can defeat the lyrebird.

Can I Keep It? A young boy accidently captures a lyrebird thinking it is a canary. Deciding to see how things play out, the lyrebird plays the roll of the boy's pet, using its abilities to help his dreams come true by banishing strict parents, bullies, and anyone else who gets in the boy's way.

TREASURE

Lyrebird eggs are as magical as they are rare. It is unwise to hatch an infant lyrebird, for the creatures have nothing but their own mercurial interests at heart. However, an egg can be consumed as an action to instantly cast the *wish* spell. Lyrebird nests in use have a 10 percent chance of having a single egg, and a 1 percent chance of having two eggs.

ECOLOGY

On the material plane, lyrebirds are blessedly rare. Their ability to cast *plane shift* allows them to be found almost anywhere in mortal realms. The birds have a preference for comfort, utterly fearless and confident in their ability to remain undetected. The lyrebird's true home rests in the fey realm, a mysterious grove of giant trees known as the Grove of the Lost. Within the trees are countless mortal victims upon which the lyrebirds make their nests. The birds can afford to be picky, never nesting upon the heads of those they deem unintelligent or that have already served as a nesting spot before. Finding the Grove of the Lost is a daunting task and exploring it without provoking a flock of lyrebirds even more so.

GOLDEN EMPEROR'S LYREBIRD

Tiny fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 162 (25d4 + 100)
Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	25 (+7)	21 (+5)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	27 (+8)

Saving Throws Dex +13, Int +12, Wis +11, Cha +14
Skills Deception +14, Insight +17, Nature +12, Perception +11, Persuasion +14, Stealth +13
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Banishing Song. When a creature that can hear the lyrebird starts its turn, the lyrebird can force it to attempt a DC 22 Charisma saving throw if the lyrebird isn't incapacitated. A creature that fails the saving throw is banished to a harmless location in the fey realm. While banished in this way, a creature's speed is 0, and it is incapacitated. A creature banished by this effect can attempt a Charisma saving throw at the end of each of its turns, reappearing in the space it vacated or in the nearest unoccupied space if that space is occupied. If a creature banished by this feature fails three saving throws in this manner, the effects become permanent and it may no longer attempt saving throws to end the effect. Forcing an affected creature to leave the fey realm by magical or physical means ends the effect.

Unless surprised, a creature can cover its ears to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it is deafened until the start of its next turn and cannot use any limbs it is using to cover its ears. If a creature hears the lyrebird in the meantime, it must immediately attempt the saving throw.

Charming Innocence. The lyrebird has a passive Deception of 24 to appear like a beautiful (but ordinary) wild bird. A creature unaware of the lyrebird's true nature cannot determine spells and effects produced by the lyrebird to be harmful until after it is affected by them.

Innate Spellcasting. The lyrebird's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 22). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *bestow curse*, *command*, *counterspell*, *dispel magic*
2/day each: *antipathy/sympathy*, *mirage arcane*
1/day each: *foresight*, *plane shift*, *telepathy*
1/century: *wish*

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

Perfect Mimicry. The lyrebird can perfectly mimic any voice or sound it has heard before. The lyrebird may project its voice to make it sound as though the noise was coming from any space within 120 feet of it.

Quick Wits. As a bonus action, the lyrebird can attempt a Charisma (Deception) or Charisma (Persuasion) ability check.

ACTIONS

Multispell. The lyrebird casts two different spells.

Flutter. The lyrebird takes the Dodge action. Until the start of its next turn, when an attack misses the lyrebird , it may immediately move up to 10 feet away from the source of the attack without provoking an attack of opportunity.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The lyrebird 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. The lyrebird regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cast a Spell. The lyrebird casts a spell it can cast at will.

Hide. The lyrebird takes the Hide action.

Brown Dragons

Chromatic dragons are not known for their sparkling personability or manners. So when a particularly twisted green began an elaborate breeding program between different types of chromatic dragons, everyone assumed the worst. They were not disappointed. After dozens of abominable failures, a new race of true-bred dragon was born: the truculent and savage brown dragon. Unattractive and malformed, brown dragons combine the worst mental and physical qualities of each chromatic dragon species. From that twisted combination is born a ravenous hunger that never ceases. This genetic anomaly drives all brown dragons toward acts of wanton destruction, and they consume everything that barely qualifies as edible (and even a few things that don't). With this hunger comes a metabolism of epic proportions. Brown dragons can easily consume their weight in food in a single day with room for more. The more a brown dragon eats, the larger it gets. Those that are able to feast with great regularity rapidly mature, circumventing a typical dragon's normally slow rate of growth. If the goal of the experimenting green was to create a universal menace that knows no allegiance, then it undoubtably succeeded, for brown dragons have been a horrific plague upon the world since the day they were first created.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a brown dragon with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

BROWN DRAGON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Brown dragons care only for food and are constantly hungry. Their jaws are freakishly strong, and they can breathe a cone of flensing particles that strip flesh into easily consumable strips. These dragons are the product of a chromatic dragon interbreeding program, with many beneficial traits granted by their lineage.
21	Once a brown dragon bites something edible, it rarely lets go. If the dragon is able to consume a significant amount of flesh, its metabolism quickly converts it into energy and mass, allowing it to recover from injuries at a frightening speed. All brown dragons are far more robust than other true dragons, with a diverse pool of defenses inherited from their genetic ancestors.
26	Older brown dragons can throw their weight around in combat using their tremendous strength to crush and consume the opposition while still on the battlefield. Their flensing breath can suppress healing effects, including magical ones. Avoid fighting one in its lair to remove its home-turf advantage, and whatever you do, don't get swallowed.

A BROWN DRAGON'S LAIR

Brown dragons enjoy lairing underground and filling their lairs with stores of food in various states of decay (not that it matters much to the dragon). In place of a hoard, a dragon gathers its favorite foodstuffs and drinks. A brown dragon will only gather treasure if it has some means to purchase a good meal on a consistent basis.

These lairs must be large to accommodate a brown dragon's girth and are protected by huge boulders that are rolled in front of passageways. Essential to a lair's composition is a source of fresh water, as brown dragons thirst as much as they hunger and prefer to move as little as possible after a big meal. Minions are rare, for few creatures can tolerate a brown dragon's stench only to wind up a meal when the dragon gets peckish.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the dragon can't cause the same effect two rounds in a row.

- A shroud of thick, whirling sand surrounds the dragon in a 10-foot-radius sphere that moves when it moves. Until the next initiative count 20, ranged attacks against the dragon are made at disadvantage and the area is considered heavily obscured.
- A ferocious stench fills the lair. Each creature other than the dragon in the lair must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or fall prone. A creature that is prone from this effect cannot stand up from prone until the end of its next turn.
- A buried carcass unearths within the lair. The dragon can take an action to consume the carcass and digests it immediately.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

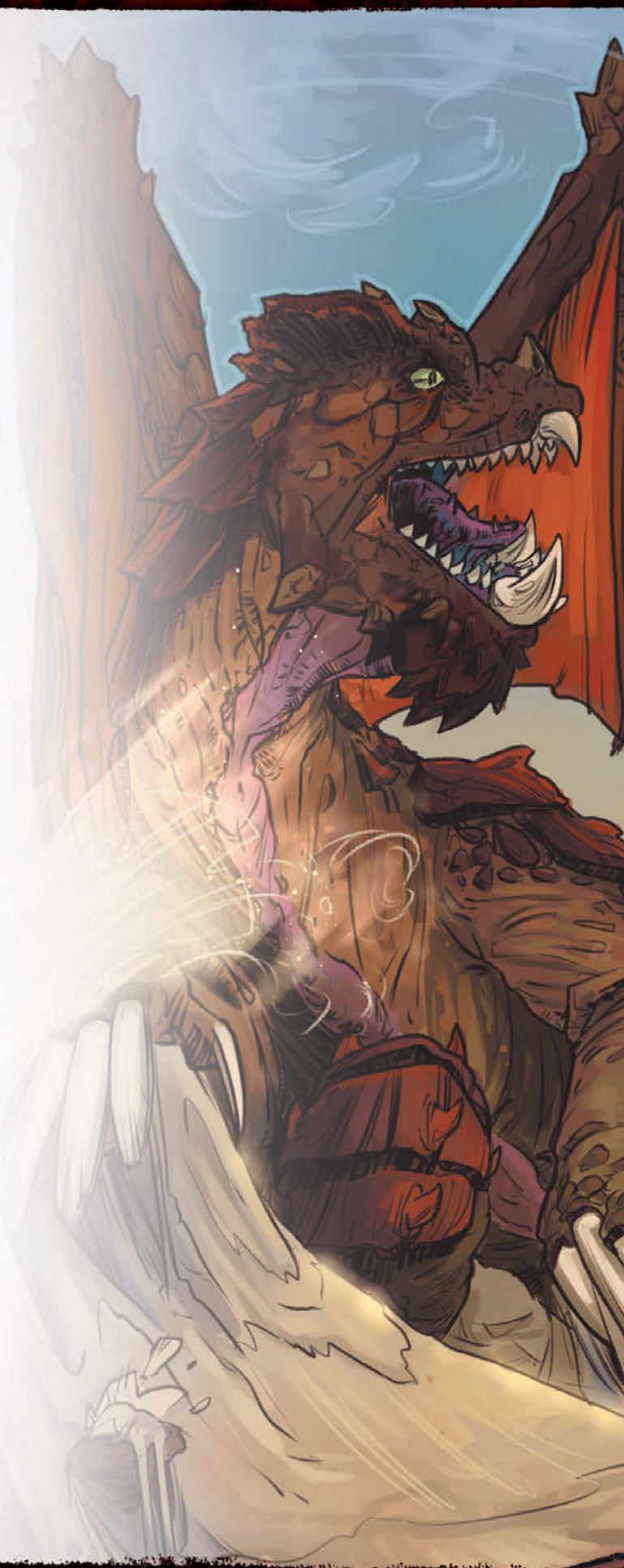
The region containing a brown dragon's lair is influenced by the dragon's magic, which creates one or more of the following effects within 10 miles of the lair.

- Whenever a humanoid creature finishes a long rest within the area, it smells delicious for the next 24 hours. Creatures have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) ability checks to detect the creature by smell, and local predators prefer the meat of such creatures over their typical prey.
- Solid stone in the area transforms into sandstone, which can be moved through by burrowing creatures but is considered difficult terrain.
- Flesh-and-blood creatures in the area must consume twice as much food in order to avoid the effects of starvation.

If the dragon dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.

TALIEN'S NOTES

The first time I saw a brown dragon, I mistook the beast for a blue suffering some horrifying disease. These dragons are clearly the product of a sick mind, and I pity them. While other chromatic dragons are cruel and evil by their nature, brown dragons are compelled to acts of violence by design. While they are motivated by food in the most extreme sense, I don't think it is possible to satisfy their hunger. At best one can delay or placate a menacing brown dragon with gifts of food, but it is a mistake to believe such a relationship can last. You are just as edible as a haunch of beef, and I suspect these dragons have little distinction for taste. This theory was confirmed when I witnessed one consume an entire otyugh in under one minute. She didn't even wash it first. Disgusting.



TREASURE

A brown dragon's eating habits are unhygienic to the point that even its prodigious digestive tract can experience problems. When these creatures eat something their stomachs can't handle or pass, it stews in its tract and causes the dragon great discomfort. Eventually, the dragon will vomit forth a mass of congealed metal, stone, and other indigestible bits, fused together by stomach acid. While disgusting, this material is useful as a scent enhancer, highly prized for use in perfumes and other scented accessories. This "dragon ambergris" is worth more than 2,000 gp per pound. Larger dragons are able to produce significant quantities of the material if given enough time, typically found in and around its lair.

ECOLOGY

Because most creatures don't appreciate being chewed, brown dragons learn from a young age to be confrontational and violent. Every living creature they encounter is either food or could become food—a most convenient arrangement in the dragon's eyes. However, older and more experienced dragons often learn the value of allies and associates. They will trade and barter with these creatures, exchanging their treasure and services for food. A well-fed and respected brown dragon is a dependable ally (as long as one holds one's nose). When establishing a lair, brown dragons prefer open hills into which they can burrow huge caverns, preferably with substantial prey nearby. These dragons must frequently relocate after exhausting the surrounding environment of all resources, reducing the land to a barren wasteland stripped of everything worth eating.

BROWN DRAGON WYRMLING

When a brown dragon is born, it immediately consumes its eggshell. It then eats any hatch-mates, local wildlife, and everything else that it can fit its mouth around. Terrified and ravenous, brown dragon wyrmlings instinctively seek out food above all other concerns. This drive helps them escape the most vulnerable period of their lives, ideally advancing to their



"young" age category within a year of successful feasting. Thankfully brown dragon wyrmlings can't actually eat that much due to their size, and more than a few creatures have enlisted the service of these dragons with a promise of food. Any creature attempting to do so would do well to remember that once the dragon's size exceeds their capacity to provide, they will be next on the menu.

The Brown Dragon Wyrmling

I have been told all babies are cute. I don't agree. I know with certainty that brown dragon wyrmlings are ugly as sin. The unsightliness of their distended jaws, mottled scales, and unshapely bodies are further exacerbated by their infantile proportions. Watching one choke down a large wolf ranks among the most unpleasant culinary events I have ever witnessed. It was enough to turn Haloa's stomach as well, and considering he takes a bite of everything he hunts, that's saying a lot.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Barbarians, Damage (Variety), Fighters, Paladins, Rangers, Strength (High)

Foils: Clerics, Constitution (Low), Sorcerers, Spells (Healing), Wizards

TACTICS

A brown dragon's opportunistic nature is evident by its battle tactics. Unless it has no other choice, it will fight to secure a meal and nothing more. Even while just a wyrmling, a dragon is far from small. It will grab anything it can fit its jaws around, preferring the tastiest-looking targets. It will then drag the target away from the battle, attempting to flee with its prize. If the dragon isn't satisfied—which is quite likely—it can always come back later for seconds. When forced to fight to the death, the dragon unleashes its Flensing Breath for maximum effect, noting which creatures fail their saving throws against it. It then targets those creatures with single-minded savagery, attempting to down them before moving on to new targets.

Easier Tactics – The dragon will keep to the ground, not making use of its climb, burrow, or fly speeds. It will never use its Flensing Breath on downed creatures and will move between targets to avoid focusing its attacks. Have the dragon release creatures from a grapple that prove too dangerous or troublesome.

Harder Tactics – The dragon will attack from a strategic position, either from the air or beneath the ground. It will then snatch a creature in its jaws and climb out of reach. Once it has downed a target, it will use its Flensing Breath to ensure the creature is unable to get back up without substantial assistance. If badly injured, the dragon will retreat to its food stores to consume dead prey, rapidly regaining hit points via its Hyper Metabolism feature.

PLOT HOOKS

Hungry Hungry Dragon. A noble purchases a dragon egg from a mysterious trader, hoping to sell the beast as an exotic pet. To his dismay, the brown dragon wyrmling proves too savage and ugly for sale and is now eating him out of house and home. The noble is too scared to even approach the dragon at this point and is looking for someone to evict the beast.

BROWN DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium dragon, any evil alignment

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +3, Con +5, Wis +5
Skills Athletics +11, Intimidation +6, Perception +5
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison
Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

TRAITS

Hyper Metabolism. When the dragon digests a flesh-and-blood creature of Small size or larger, it regains 14 (4d6) hit points. A dead creature or a creature at 0 hit points that is swallowed by the dragon is immediately digested.

Juggernaut. If the dragon would be moved from its space, it may take a reaction to prevent that movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes two attacks: one with its Bite and one with its Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d12 + 5) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled and restrained (escape DC 16).

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Flensing Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales a blast of air and sand that tears flesh from bone in a 40-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 31 (7d8) slashing damage, or half as much on a success. A creature that fails the saving throw by 5 or more has its hit point maximum reduced by an equivalent amount. This effect lasts until it takes a short or long rest or receives magical healing from a spell of 2nd level or higher.

Mystery of the Vanishing Sheep. A farmer is losing sheep from his flock every night. A panoply of defensive measures has proven ineffective, with entire sheep disappearing, mysteriously leaving no remains. Little does he realize a brown dragon has built a lair under his barn, burrowing up late at night to snag a quick snack.

Problem Child. A silver dragon takes pity on a brown dragon wyrmling, adopting it in hopes of changing its nature through good parenting. Now she must leave on important dragon business and is looking for a babysitter—or several—to handle the difficult child while she is away.

YOUNG BROWN DRAGON

If a brown dragon wyrmling is able to eat its weight in food each day for more than 500 days, it will grow to become a young brown dragon. Beefier than other true dragons, these teenage specimens have developed new physiological abilities and battle tactics that suit their large forms. Unless raised in an unusual environment, a brown dragon's sinister nature becomes dominant. This makes these dragons heartless and self-centered, refusing to do anything unless it directly benefits their interests. Some even develop cruel habits, such as holding struggling prey in their mouths just to feel them squirm. While far from dull, young brown dragons act with a shortsighted stubbornness, unable to plan more than a step or two ahead or see the big picture of a given situation. Each young brown dragon starts to develop a unique palate, finding it more enjoyable to eat certain foods rather than whatever they come across. A dragon will go to some lengths to acquire its preferred food, which can be used as leverage by a shrewd negotiator.

The Young Brown Dragon

The secret to defeating a brown dragon is its sense of taste. Find out what it likes and you will have the advantage. Don't let their motley appearance and dour demeanor fool you—these dragons fight as savagely as an angry white with the cunning of a conniving green. The heritage these dragons share with the pure chromatics appears to be a point of great offense among dragonkind, and I can understand why. When I mentioned their relationship to the great Pyrathraxis Hexfang, her thunderous objection blew out both my eardrums.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Barbarians, Damage (Variety), Fighters, Paladins, Rangers, Strength (High)

Foils: Clerics, Constitution (Low), Sorcerers, Spells (Healing), Wizard

YOUNG BROWN DRAGON

Large dragon, any evil alignment

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 199 (21d10 + 84)
Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +12, Dex +5, Con +9, Wis +8
Skills Athletics +17, Intimidation +9, Perception +8
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison
Senses darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Hyper Metabolism. When the dragon digests a flesh-and-blood creature of Small size or larger, it regains 21 (6d6) hit points. A dead creature or a creature at 0 hit points that is swallowed by the dragon is immediately digested.

Juggernaut. If the dragon would be moved from its space, it may take a reaction to prevent that movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its Bite and two with its Claw. The dragon may replace one of these attacks with its Challenging Roar.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 33 (4d12 + 7) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled and restrained (escape DC 20).

Challenging Roar. The dragon roars a mighty challenge to its enemies. Each creature within 120 feet that can hear the roar must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to meet the dragon's challenge for 1 minute. A creature so challenged cannot willingly move away from the dragon and cannot affect creatures other than the dragon with its spells, attacks, or abilities. A creature may repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the charmed condition is immune to this effect.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (2d12 + 7) slashing damage.

Flensing Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales a blast of air and sand that tears flesh from bone in a 40-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must attempt a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 54 (12d8) slashing damage, or half as much on a success. A creature that fails the saving throw by 5 or more has its hit point maximum reduced by an equivalent amount. This effect lasts until it takes a short or long rest or receives magical healing from a spell of 4th level or higher.

TACTICS

With a good number of fights under its belt and a new array of abilities, young brown dragons fight with far greater confidence than wyrmlings. Most will open with a Challenging Roar to keep tasty morsels from escaping or from aiding allies in dire situations. The dragon will then Bite an enemy as quickly as possible, choosing a frail and chewable target. Once its foes are good and injured, it will unleash its Flensing Breath for maximum effect, finishing off low-health targets who couldn't succeed on the saving throw. Notice that the dragon's Hyper Metabolism feature has improved, allowing it to consume bodies for additional hit points. Doing so typically requires a Use Object action on the dragon's part but can be well worth the effort.

Easier Tactics – Don't use the dragon's Challenging Roar, and proceed straight to the mauling. Play up the dragon's overconfident and brutal nature, like an oversized cat toying with pests. Only use Flensing Breath against a single character at a time and never against low-health targets who could get taken to 0 hit points.

Harder Tactics – The dragon will fight in its lair, basing its strategies on the effects it produces. It won't focus on eating to recover hit points, knowing that dealing damage is far more effective toward ending a fight. Use Flensing Breath on the first turn and at every available opportunity thereafter. Its damage is substantial, and the effect is brutal.

PLOT HOOKS

Dragon's Kitchen. An excitable brown dragon has learned what a chef is and has decided to acquire one to serve her personally. With no chefs lining up for the job, she has decided to kidnap one from a local town, along with a few tasty travel snacks.

Eating Contest. A girthy hill giant has challenged a local brown dragon to an eating contest. Whoever eats the most halflings in a single day wins, and the contest starts next week. The halfling community is horrified, while the scum and villainy of the world begin a betting pool with tremendous payout potential.

Is There a Doctor in the House? A young brown dragon crashes in the middle of a small town, writhing in pain from something stuck in its gut. So far, the dragon hasn't hurt anyone but has caused considerable property damage in its agony. A brave and skilled healer is required to cure the creature, which will hopefully continue on its journey.

ADULT BROWN DRAGON

If a young brown dragon is able to eat its weight in food each day for 2,000 days, it will grow to become an adult brown dragon. At this point the dragon's appetite has reached legendary levels, and there are few creatures it has not tasted. Its culinary expertise is exceptional, and the dragon is able to divine a tremendous amount of information just by tasting something once. Its obsession with a certain type of food has narrowed to be even more specific. A brand of liquor, certain breed of animal, or specific subrace of humanoid are typically within the range of specificity appropriate for this obsession. While its hunger is no less great, the dragon has learned to live with the discomfort, preferring a quality meal over mindless consumption. An adult brown dragon delights in sharing knowledge of food and drink with others, a disturbing experience to many who would never dream of eating half the things a brown dragon would.

The Adult Brown Dragon

I met an adult brown dragon once, and I am pleased to report they do grow more tolerable with age. You shouldn't trust one, of course, but they are not entirely governed by hunger like younger specimens. The one I encountered had an obsession with apples and become ecstatic when I provided three wagons full. The creature was then content to answer many of my questions and even share some of its own knowledge about the taste and texture of many creatures—knowledge I admit I did not have. Though I don't think I'll ever get over its description about how a gnome like myself tastes.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Barbarians, Damage (Variety), Fighters, Paladins, Rangers, Strength (High)

Foils: Clerics, Constitution (Low), Sorcerers, Spells (Healing), Wizards

TACTICS

Now a legendary creature, an adult brown dragon takes a drastically different tactical approach to combat. With its Munch attack, it can swallow a creature it is grappling with its Bite as an action or legendary action. The dragon should do this as often as possible. Any creature that succumbs while swallowed immediately dies from the Hyper Metabolism feature and healing the dragon. Note that its Dash legendary action opens up new combat opportunities when considering the dragon's many modes of movement. Hold Legendary Resistance in reserve in case the dragon needs to escape an effect that would incapacitate it or if it would regurgitate a swallowed creature.

Easier Tactics – The dragon won't use Munch as a legendary action, only swallowing a creature if it can hold onto the victim until the start of the dragon's next turn. It should stay on the ground to make use of its tremorsense, keeping it in range of melee characters without handicapping itself arbitrarily.

Harder Tactics – The dragon will transition between aerial and ground combat. It will fly to its favorite target and grapple it with a Bite attack.

It will then use its legendary actions to Dash, burrowing under the ground with its victim. It will swallow the creature before emerging, repeating the process all over again until it has consumed the entire party.

PLOT HOOKS

Unwelcome Guest. A large town celebrates the new year by holding an extravagant feast. Hearing of the legendary banquet, an adult brown dragon has declared its intention to attend the festivities. Unsure of how to respond, the town has been preparing far more food than normal in hopes they can feed the dragon and avoid a confrontation. A long shot to be sure.

Food Poisoning. An adult brown dragon recently ate a powerful wizard, then figured the old man's potions qualified as food. Now the dragon is experiencing a startling combination of magical effects that were never meant to be combined, causing bizarre transformations, elemental eruptions, and general mayhem. The effects have been occurring for three days straight with no signs of stopping.

The Most Important Meal of the Day. After hibernating for a century, a brown dragon has awoken ravenously hungry to the point of near insanity. The beast is making a beeline for the nearest population center and likely won't stop there.

ADULT BROWN DRAGON

Huge dragon, any evil alignment

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 312 (25d12 + 150)
Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +15, Dex +6, Con +12, Wis +11
Skills Athletics +21, Intimidation +10, Perception +11
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison
Senses darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 90 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Hyper Metabolism. When the dragon digests a flesh-and-blood creature of Small size or larger, it regains 28 (8d6) hit points. A dead creature or a creature at 0 hit points that is swallowed by the dragon is immediately digested.

Juggernaut. If the dragon would be moved from its space, it may take a reaction to prevent that movement.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its Bite or Munch, and two with its Claw. The dragon may replace one of these attacks with its Challenging Roar.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 40 (5d12 + 8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled and restrained (escape DC 22).

Challenging Roar. The dragon roars a mighty challenge to its enemies. Each creature within 120 feet that can hear the roar must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to meet the dragon's challenge for 1 minute. A creature so challenged cannot willingly move away from the dragon and cannot affect creatures other than the dragon with its spells, attacks, or abilities. A creature may repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the charmed condition is immune to this effect.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d10 + 8) slashing damage.

Flensing Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales a blast of air and sand that tears flesh from bone in a 40-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must attempt a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or take 72 (16d8) slashing damage, or half as much on a success. A creature that fails the saving throw by 5 or more has its hit point maximum reduced by an equivalent amount. This effect lasts until it takes a short or long rest or receives magical healing from a spell of 6th level or higher.

Munch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Large or smaller creature grappled by the dragon. *Hit:* The creature is swallowed by the dragon. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the dragon, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage and 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the dragon's turns. A creature with 0 hit points that takes this damage is digested.

If the dragon takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 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 dragon. If the dragon dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon 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. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Claw. The dragon makes a Claw attack.

Dash. The dragon moves up to its speed.

Flex. The dragon attempts a Strength (Athletics) check that it could attempt as an action.

Munch (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon makes a Munch attack.

ANCIENT BROWN DRAGON

If an adult brown dragon is able to eat its weight in food each day for 10,000 days, it will grow to become an ancient brown dragon. The gourmands of dragonkind, these massive creatures have an exquisite taste in food with an appetite to match. At this stage in life a brown dragon has sampled all confections it can find and knows what it wants. They have incredibly specific preferences that seem absurd to even the most refined of palates. An ancient brown dragon's favorite food may be boiled chocolate mixed with gold and rubies or chilled elf brains in a watermelon bowl. These dishes are rarely things the dragons can get on their own, so they typically enlist a cooking staff to prepare their extensive meals. In the rare case these dragons encounter something they have not eaten, they pursue it with a hunger reminiscent of their youth. Given their impressive power at this age, nothing escapes an ancient brown dragon looking to try something new.

The Ancient Brown Dragon

If one counted all the food that has disappeared down an ancient brown dragon's gullet, you would have enough to feed an entire nation for a year. That is not an exaggeration. Their ravenous appetite has been tempered with age, but you should still never come between one and its meal. While other dragons know of ancient magic, divine secrets, and mysterious worlds, these wyrms understand a more conventional topic: food. They know everything there is to know about food and can recommend the perfect meal for any race, occasion, and palate. If they weren't so overbearing and dangerous, they would make the perfect consulting gourmand for the finest of restaurants.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Brute

Favors: Barbarians, Damage (Variety), Fighters, Paladins, Rangers, Strength (High)

Foils: Clerics, Constitution (Low), Sorcerers, Spells (Healing), Wizards

TACTICS

With almost as many hit points as a tarrasque, an ancient brown dragon is a powerhouse in combat. Note the statistical improvements across the board. Everything younger brown dragons can do, this one does better. Spellcasters are likely to run out of slots long before the dragon runs out of hit points, made all the worse by its ability to recover hit points at an astonishing rate via Hyper Metabolism. Plan for combat to last quite a few turns, and use Challenging Roar immediately to keep the battle on the dragon's terms. A save DC of 26 is tough to beat, so expect the Challenging Roar and Flensing Breath to consistently work. The dragon should always have at least one creature swallowed and can rely on its high Constitution saving throw bonus to keep itself from regurgitating.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Challenging Roar when the dragon could instead attack. Only swallow one character at a time, holding others with a grapple until it can digest them. In favor of making attacks, the dragon should grapple creatures with its claws, holding them until its ready to start its second course. Treat the entire combat like an eating contest the dragon is enjoying, at least until it gets low on hit points.

Harder Tactics – Open with Flensing Breath, then use legendary actions to deliver as many Claw attacks as possible. On the second turn, make sure to grapple a creature with the Bite attack, and then Munch it with legendary actions. On the third turn use Challenging Roar—unless Flensing Breath is available, in which case you should use it instead—and mop up any survivors in subsequent rounds. Use grapples to hold creatures in the Flensing Breath's area for devastating effect.

PLOT HOOKS

Expensive Tastes. A high-class, interplanar restaurant has lost its head chef, an ancient brown dragon who designed every dish they serve. Without its unrivaled expertise, the restaurant will soon go out of business due to the high expense of operations. The rewards for the dragon's return are significant to say the least.

No Finer Vintage. An ancient brown dragon is offering the entire contents of her hoard for a barrel of wine from an ancient winery. One problem: the winery is now a haunted manor filled with powerful undead and overseen by a lich sommelier loath to part with even a single bottle.

A Classic Tale. You've all heard the story. A dragon kidnapped a princess to have for dinner. Heroes are needed to stop it. Better get to work, as the characters have 24 hours before its princess pie à la mode.

ANCIENT BROWN DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon, any evil alignment

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 577 (33d20 + 231)
Speed 50 ft., burrow 50 ft., climb 50 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	10 (+0)	25 (+7)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +18, Dex +8, Con +15, Wis +13
Skills Athletics +26, Intimidation +14, Perception +13
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison
Senses darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 25 (75,000 XP)

TRAITS

Hyper Metabolism. When the dragon digests a flesh-and-blood creature of Small size or larger, it regains 35 (10d6) hit points. A dead creature or a creature at 0 hit points that is swallowed by the dragon is immediately digested.

Juggernaut. If the dragon would be moved from its space, it may take a reaction to prevent that movement.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its Bite or Munch, and two with its Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12 + 10) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled and restrained (escape DC 26).

Challenging Roar. The dragon roars a mighty challenge to its enemies. Each creature within 120 feet that can hear the roar must succeed on a DC 26 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to meet the dragon's challenge for 1 minute. A creature so challenged cannot willingly move away from the dragon and cannot affect creatures other than the dragon with its spells, attacks, or abilities. A creature may repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the charmed condition is immune to this effect.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 32 (4d10 + 10) slashing damage.

Flensing Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales a blast of air and sand that tears flesh from bone in a 40-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must attempt a DC 26 Constitution saving throw or take 90 (20d8) slashing damage, or half as much on a success. A creature that fails the saving throw by 5 or more has its hit point maximum reduced by an equivalent amount. This effect lasts until it takes a short or long rest or receives magical healing from a spell of 8th level or higher.

Munch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Large or smaller creature grappled by the dragon. *Hit:* The creature is swallowed by the dragon. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the dragon, and it takes 28 (8d6) acid damage and 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the dragon's turns. A creature with 0 hit points that takes this damage is digested.

If the dragon takes 40 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the dragon must succeed on a DC 25 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 dragon. If the dragon dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon 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. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Claw. The dragon makes a Claw attack.

Dash. The dragon moves up to its speed.

Flex. The dragon attempts a Strength (Athletics) check that it could attempt as an action.

Munch (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon makes a Munch attack.

Demon Seeds

Nature is not a force exclusive to the material plane. Across the planes plants bloom, some of which evolve to survive harsh hellscapes of demonic realms. Such is the case with the family of plants known as demon seeds, which have not only survived, but thrived, in the lower planes. These toxic plants redefine what it means to be an invasive species. Each member of the demon seeds family is aggressive and hostile, assaulting anything that gets too close. They are primitively intelligent, slightly more aware than animals, and capable of using basic tactics in battle. They have no grand schemes they pursue, but their biological instincts drive them to spread and reproduce, creating the appearance of coordination when they reach sufficient numbers. Having found their way to the material plane, demon seeds have given today's adventurers a fresh host of reasons to fear nature.

WANDERING DEATHROLLER

The wandering deathroller crashes into its foes and keeps going, like a hellish tumbleweed scooping them up and grinding them against the ground as it goes. Its body is a sphere of thorns and thick brambles nearly 15 ft. in diameter, with gaps in the foliage just large enough for prey to become entangled. These creatures never stop moving, and from within their rolling shape one can spot a single glowing eye that aids the deathroller in navigating its environment. Despite its enormous size, it can roll up vertical surfaces and even across liquids, allowing them to be found almost anywhere on the material plane. The speeds a deathroller can achieve are staggering, zooming across the landscape in pursuit of desperate prey.

The Wandering Deathroller

Ionia Faelindel once cultivated a crop of wandering deathrollers. She unleashed them on a horde of giants threatening her forest, and the results were devastating. The most astonishing display was when she calmly beckoned the deathrollers back and they acquiesced, coming to a halt and lying dormant like winter oaks. I believe they guard her grove to this day. Best not to trespass.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Flight, Monks, Paralysis, Rangers, Strength (High)

Foils: Fighters, Melee, Mobility (Low), Paladins, Radiant (Damage)

TALIEN'S NOTES

Demon seeds are ancient plants filled with a ravenous hunger. They seek out living beings and attempt to destroy, devour, and consume them. Their forms are varied and perfectly specialized for a specific mode of attack, honed over millennia of evolution on abyssal planes. One can see the origins of demon seeds in the plant life of the material plane. Tumbleweeds, thorny shrubs, roots, and even trees all share a common ancestry with demon seeds, though the influence of demonic energy has elevated and twisted them into the horrors we know today. They are possessed of a cold and minimal sentience, just enough to get some gruesome satisfaction that only a predator can enjoy. Even druids fear groves where demon seeds grow. Well, all druids but Ionia. She fears nothing.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a wandering deathroller with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

WANDERING DEATHROLLER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	The wandering deathroller, or *cylindro mors errando*, is a tumbleweed from the hells. It's a 15-foot-diameter mass of razor-sharp brambles that crashes into its prey and scoops it up, dragging it along until the victim stops struggling. Tiny nodules of roots on each thorn consume nutrients from the corpses embedded in the deathroller.
18	The deathroller is extremely quick and can't be stopped by any known means, even magic. It can be slowed down, but only to a point. It is capable of breaking through or rolling up and over any physical barriers, and anyone or anything struck by the deathroller risks becoming entangled within.
22	Wandering deathrollers rely on tremorsense to detect their prey—creatures flying in the air or otherwise not touching the ground are effectively invisible. Additionally, the plant is susceptible to magics that inflict paralysis, leaving it vulnerable to assault as it struggles to recover.

TACTICS

The wandering deathroller exemplifies hit-and-run tactics. Use Charge on every turn unless Bounce is the only way to get at the party. Though the deathroller uses its Ram attack via Charge, don't forget to account

for its Hollow trait, which allows it to move through other creatures' spaces and potentially grapple them. It should attack and attempt to grapple as many characters as possible, then move away from the rest of the group.

The deathroller can attack even a flying creature by using Bounce to leap up at a target. However, it relies on tremorsense to detect its prey, so a flying creature is invisible to it, and the deathroller must guess a creature's location based on where it was attacked from. With an Intelligence of 5, this is more of an instinctive guess than a rational one. Stationary flying creatures should be vulnerable; those who are darting around and playing it smart are much harder to pin down.

Lastly, don't forget about the Grind trait—which deals damage to creatures grappled by the deathroller whenever it moves—and the Momentum trait. The deathroller can't be prevented from moving by any effect. It pairs extremely well with monsters with the soldier and controller classifications that can lock the party down and prevent them from helping a captured ally.

Easier Tactics – Use Bounce a few times to grapple the party with the Hollow trait. This does less damage than Charge but still plays up the deathroller's unique ability to grapple characters and drag them around.

Harder Tactics – Use Charge and roll in until you grapple a character, then switch directions and move as far away from the rest of the party as possible. Split the party and keep rolling around, grinding the abducted character to dust before returning to grab another.

PLOT HOOKS

Hit N' Run. The party is traveling with a caravan of multiple wagons when a wandering deathroller crashes through the line, bowling over one of the wagons and taking several people with it. Do they stop and attempt a rescue or press on to their destination?

Body Recovery. A wandering deathroller kills someone of great importance, perhaps a traveling diplomat carrying an offer of peace, whose body is still stuck in the deathroller. The party needs to track it down and recover the victim's possessions.

Population Explosion. Natural conditions are just right for a boom in the wandering deathroller population. The party might have a chance to snuff it out early, or they might be too late and arrive just as the deathrollers bloom and take off in separate directions.

TREASURE

Extracts from the thorns of a wandering deathroller can be used to empower potions of all sorts. A single wandering deathroller provides three doses of extracts, each of which can be sold for 2,000 gp or used to empower a single potion. When properly mixed with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Alchemist's Supplies) ability check, the potion's duration is doubled. If the potion has an instantaneous effect, such as a *potion of healing*, any dice rolls made as part of the potion's effect are treated as if the maximum possible value had been rolled.

WANDERING DEATHROLLER

Huge plant, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 161 (17d12 + 51)
Speed 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +9
Damage Resistances fire, piercing
Damage Immunities psychic, radiant
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, prone, stunned, unconscious
Senses tremorsense 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11
Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

TRAITS

All-Terrain Plant. The deathroller can move up and across vertical surfaces and across liquids without falling during the move. If the deathroller takes falling damage and is grappling one or more creatures, it instead takes no damage and splits the falling damage evenly between creatures it is grappling.

Grind. When the deathroller moves along the ground, it grinds the bodies of those it is grappling into the dirt. Creatures so grappled take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet the deathroller moves in this manner.

Hollow. The deathroller's body is hollow, and it can move through other creatures and objects smaller than it as though they were difficult terrain. When the deathroller moves into a creature for the first time on a turn or starts its turn within the deathroller's space, it must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or become grappled by the deathroller. A creature grappled in this manner is also restrained.

Momentum. The deathroller's speed cannot be reduced to less than 40 feet. If an effect would prevent the deathroller from spending movement, it may instead spend movement.

ACTIONS

Bounce. The deathroller jumps up to 60 feet vertically and horizontally.

Charge. The deathroller takes the Dash action and then moves up to its speed in a straight line. If the deathroller encounters any creatures or objects in its path that would prevent this movement, it may make a single Ram attack against them (no action required).

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage. This attack deals double damage to objects and structures. On a successful hit, the deathroller may spend 10 movement to deal and extra 3 (1d6) damage for every 10 feet of movement spent.


JASON STRUTZ
STRUTZART



ECOLOGY

Wandering deathrollers are predatory plants and often roll at maximum speed to preserve momentum and conserve energy. They stop only after catching and killing enough prey to sate their hunger, pausing until the creatures are fully digested. The age of a wandering deathroller can be estimated by the quantity of bones trapped in its brambles, the oldest of which rattle constantly from the hundreds of trapped remains. While deathrollers can be found anywhere plants can grow, they prefer temperate climates that have large open plains. Once a year for an entire day, a deathroller will deploy spikey seed pods that embed themselves in the earth. If another deathroller rolls over the pods, they become fertilized and germinate within a period of 5 years. A clutch of mature deathrollers will migrate as a "flock" far from the place of their birth, covering hundreds of miles and crushing anything in their way.

BURROWING TRAPROOT

Stepping into the demesne of a burrowing traproot is the last mistake of many a neophyte ranger. This plant shoots roots up from deep underground, targeting creatures it can detect with its long-range tremorsense. Those who are struck find themselves dragged underground and buried alive, easy prey for the traproot's sharp bite. In the rare moments when it can be found above ground, a traproot appears as a column of thick roots, in which is nestled a single glowing eye and gnarled maw. Hardy and patient, burrowing traproots have earned the nickname "vanishers" for their ambush tactics that rarely leave behind any evidence.

The Burrowing Traproot

If you spot an expansive area in a forest that seems utterly devoid of land-dwelling fauna, take heed. You may be approaching the residence of a burrowing traproot. This devious denizen of the natural world lurks under the earth and lashes out with powerful roots that snatch victims and drag them below. Once you are entombed in the soil, the plant itself burrows closer and begins to feed, its beak-like mouth a disturbingly bestial contrast to its roots and vines. I recommend bringing along a small mammal to test for the traproots presence. Simply toss the creature into where you suspect the traproot to be. If it vanishes instantly, best find another route.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Barbarians, Fighters, Grappling, Movement (Forced), Warlocks

Foils: Clerics, Paladins, Range, Rogues, Sight-Blocking

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a burrowing traproot with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

BURROWING TRAPROOT LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Burrowing traproots are patient ambush predators, lurking underground until they detect movement above. They strike without warning, dragging victims underground and burying them in the soil. Then the traproot burrows closer and begins to feed.
19	Targeting the traproot directly is almost impossible. Killing this elusive creature requires burrowing down to its level, readying an attack to strike when it lashes out, or some truly clever thinking.
24	The traproot's attacks can't puncture stone or similarly dense material, and the creature likewise can't move through such terrain. Effective use of spells such as *wall of stone* can offer protection from its attacks or prevent it from returning underground once it has been extracted.

TACTICS

The traproot is a simple creature. It attacks three different targets with its Root attacks and only uses its Bite if a creature fails to escape two rounds in a row. Don't forget to apply its Sneak Attack trait to deal bonus damage once per turn when it has advantage on an attack roll (such as against a buried creature).

The party will need to be clever to extract the traproot—you should be generous in allowing their unusual ideas a chance of success. Pulling the traproot from the ground requires a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check or an opposed Strength (Athletics) ability check against the traproot (DM's choice). If the traproot is pulled above ground, its top priority is to get back under, and it should Disengage and move as deep as it can.

Easier Tactics – Keep the traproot close to the surface. You can even have it burrow up to make a bite attack, leaving it vulnerable for a round. Exposing it to attacks in this way makes the fight much easier than it would normally be. If the party is still having trouble, hint that PCs can potentially dig or pull the traproot from the ground with enough strength.

Harder Tactics – The root should attack with surprise; few parties expect an attack from below ground. Use all three Root attacks on one creature, pulling the target up to 30 feet underground. This makes it almost impossible for the party to help, and you can repeat the process each turn to pull the victim down another 30 feet every round. Unless the party has a genius stratagem and the right spells prepared, that character is a goner.

PLOT HOOKS

Unexplained Disappearances. Venturing into the forest alone for 24 hours was once a rite of passage into adulthood. In the past, most survived this generally harmless ritual, but now fewer and fewer younglings are returning. Even the adults who follow them from a distance have begun to vanish, as a burrowing traproot moves closer to the village itself.

From Bad To Worse. A burrowing traproot strikes in the middle of an ongoing battle. Can the party make themselves unappetizing targets to incentivize the plant to attack their foes?

Guardian. A villain makes a lair in a tower of wood and earth and has lured or grown a burrowing traproot in the walls of the structure. It lashes out at intruders, dragging them into the walls and ceilings.

TREASURE

The roots of a burrowing traproot can be used to create the *burrowing trap-whip*, a potent magical weapon. Creating this item may require additional reagents, a magic ritual, or an expenditure of 25,000 gp, as well as the relatively intact body of a recently diseased burrowing trap root.

Burrowing Trap-Whip

Weapon (whip), rare (requires attunement)

This whip of roots and leaves twitches in your hand, eager to be used. The whip has a reach of 15 feet (instead of the usual 10 feet), and your attacks ignore cover from natural terrain as the whip punches through dirt and even unworked stone to strike your target. Creatures hit by this whip are immediately pulled up to 10 feet closer to you.

While holding the weapon, you can use an action to cast the spell *locate creature* without any material components. The whip points in the direction of the target, and the spell lasts for its full duration without requiring concentration. Once used, this ability can't be used again until the next dawn.

ECOLOGY

Burrowing traproots are the most patient of the predatory plants. They fall dormant for months or years, until prey approaches. When a tasty morsel happens along, the plant awakens instantly, striking at the target without hesitation. They tend to ignore Huge or larger creatures, as such beasts are too large to be easily consumed. They also recoil from undead, oozes, constructs, and other such unappetizing meals, attacking once and then retreating when they realize the true nature of their prey. When it comes time to reproduce, a traproot detaches one of its limbs, which burrows away from the "parent" for months. Once it has found a suitable hunting ground, the limb will gestate into a new traproot over the course of several months. Traproots are never found in high concentrations unless forcibly transplanted.

NEW CONDITION: BURIED

A buried creature is submerged beneath loose earth. While submerged, the creature cannot move and is restrained unless it has a burrow speed. While buried, a creature must hold its breath or begin to suffocate. A buried creature can take an action to attempt a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) ability check. On a success, it is no longer restrained and can dig its way out by spending 4 feet of movement for every 1 foot it digs.

BURROWING TRAPROOT

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 171 (18d10 + 72)
Speed 10 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +8
Skills Stealth +7
Damage Resistances fire
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, stunned, unconscious
Senses tremorsense 300 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11
Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Lurker. The traproot's attacks can pierce through solid ground and around obstacles with unerring precision. Creatures standing on ground not made of stone or similarly dense material cannot have cover against the traproot.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The traproot does an extra 21 (6d6) damage when it 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 the traproot that isn't incapacitated and the traproot doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The traproot makes three Root attacks and a single Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 33 (6d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Root. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d12 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it is pulled up to 10 feet toward the traproot. If this movement would pull the creature completely into the ground, it becomes buried.

IRONTHORN SNIPESHRUB

A single thorn, sixteen inches in length, sharper than a mithral blade, and fired with the force of a ballista bolt—this is the calling card of the ironthorn snipeshrub. It's a stationary and almost entirely reactive creature; one wrong move in the presence of this botanical bombardier means a fusillade of spines. Even getting into melee range is no guarantee of safety, as the snipeshrub's spines have such force they knock aggressors back a substantial distance. The snipeshrub is unassuming in appearance, about the size of an ordinary garden shrub but with massive thorns as hard as steel. Closer observation reveals a large perceptive eye that can detect the presence of creatures at an impressive distance. Few ever make it close enough to the shrub to learn this fact before succumbing to a withering hail of deadly projectiles.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an ironthorn snipeshrub with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

IRONTHORN SNIPESHRUB LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	The ironthorn snipeshrub is a devilish plant that projects highly accurate, long-range spines at anything it perceives. It has immaculate senses capable of detecting the slightest movement, and its spines strike with such force they can knock back creatures and even pin them against solid surfaces.
20	The snipeshrub can see through invisibility effects and isn't fooled by illusions. It can fire four thorns every few seconds and is capable of focusing on a particular target to deal devastating damage. Cover is near useless against the creature's precise aim.
24	While the ironthorn snipeshrub is capable of firing with extreme precision, it can't hit what it can't see. Blocking its line of sight with magical barriers offers significant protection against its attacks. It is capable of firing an ultra-accurate shot that can strike even creatures hidden from its unblinking eye, but these thorns take longer to regrow.

TACTICS

The ironthorn snipeshrub is best used in a large area with plenty of distance between it and the party. There should be some cover, perhaps large trees in a forest, but not too much. Terrain is hugely important when designing an encounter with a snipeshrub. Be cautious if you have any extremely long-ranged characters in the party, as terrain that is too open could allow them to whittle down the snipeshrub without ever being in danger.

On each of the snipeshrub's turns, it should use Headshot if available and then Ready Shot to ready four Thorn Snipe shots. In general, the condition used for each readied action is "whenever it sees a creature move," but you can get more specific for some of them if needed, such as "if a creature casts a spell." You shouldn't tell the party the conditions outright, but you can allow them to discern the conditions with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature), Wisdom (Insight), or Wisdom (Survival) ability check. On turns where Headshot is not available, use Critical Eye on whomever is either closest to the snipeshrub or the most dangerous opponent, and then use Ready Shot.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Headshot and be especially specific with the conditions for Ready Shot, such as "the first creature to move more than 15 feet in a straight line," giving the party opportunities to read the snipeshrub's habits and plan around them. Consider giving the party a warning shot if you are feeling particularly generous.

Harder Tactics – Just because the snipeshrub isn't very smart doesn't mean it can't be patient. The shrub will lie in wait until all the PCs have come within range of its attacks. Once all targets are in sight, it will attack with surprise, preferably from a hard to reach location. The shrub should pin a character out in the open, forcing allies to choose between ducking for cover, or rendering assistance. Any enemy that comes within 60 ft. of the shrub is top priority, and you should focus fire on that target until it drops or retreats.

The Ironthorn Snipeshrub

Archmagister King referred to this creature as "Shrub-Niggurath, the black bush with a thousand spines" whilst pinned upside-down by one of the shrub's sixteen-inch thorns. While the pun was painfully bad, his frustration at the plant's deadly attacks is quite reasonable. The fact that someone so educated could use his knowledge to make puns is an affront to all scholarly pursuits. If you should encounter him one day, don't bring up this anecdote unless you're in a hurry to be incinerated. I can only get away with publishing it because he owes me. Consider your debt paid Archmagister.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Artillery

Favors: Druids, Sight-Blocking, Teleportation, Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Invisibility, Melee, Rogues

PLOT HOOKS

Pistil Duel. A pair of migrating ironthorn snipeshrubs come into each other's range. Each time one of them fires a thorn, the sound of the impact triggers the other one to fire at the same spot. This constant back and forth is making a huge swath of the trail impassible.

Strange Sentinel. To safeguard an item of great power, an ironthorn snipeshrub was planted upon its resting place. It is said that only one of "great valor" can acquire the item. Does that mean charging directly at the snipeshrub? Or perhaps discretion truly is the better part of valor.

Unusual Cargo. A pirate is smuggling a cargo of ironthorn snipeshrubs across a great distance. The ship is rigged so the lower decks can open, exposing several of the plants within, allowing them to fire upon approaching vessels.

TREASURE

The thorns of an ironthorn snipeshrub can be used to create an *ironthorn javelin*, a magical weapon that can be thrown once to devastating effect. A typical snipeshrub bush, provided it is recovered intact, can provide enough high quality thorns to make seven of these javelins per year. Dead snipeshrubs typically only have enough thorns to fashion three. Creating an *ironthorn javelin* requires 4 hours of strenuous activity and a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Woodcarver's tools). A failure renders a thorn unsuitable for further use.

Ironthorn Javelin

Weapon (javelin), rare

This javelin has no special effect until its command word is spoken, at which point it begins to hum with energy. Once it is activated, you can use your action to throw it at a creature you can see within 120 feet. The target must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw against a DC of 10 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength or Dexterity modifier (whichever is higher) or take 50 piercing damage. The target gains no benefit from nonmagical cover on its saving throw. Whether the target succeeds or fails, the javelin is destroyed after being used in this manner.

ECOLOGY

Ironthorn snipeshrubs are not fully stationary—they are capable of sluggishly moving along the ground or up vertical surfaces. They tend to migrate in this manner, not disturbing anything around them until they find a location surrounded by wildlife. Once they settle in, they immediately begin enfilading the entire area, killing anything and everything that moves. After doing so, they linger for a time to absorb the nutrients left behind by the many corpses. Wildlife in the area quickly learn to avoid a snipeshrub, which bases its attacks solely on movement. Only the smallest of creatures do not trigger a snipeshrub's reflexive thorns, making the areas havens for vermin and other Tiny creatures. Woodland dwelling civilizations have been known to make use of snipeshrubs for defense, lowering them into holding areas below ground in the event they are not needed. Such communities are either desperate or xenophobic, as a danger of such an arrangement can easily outweigh the potential benefits.

IRONTHORN SNIPESHRUB

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 161 (19d8 + 76)
Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	24 (+7)	19 (+4)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +8, Cha +2
Skills Perception +13
Damage Resistances fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities deafened, exhaustion, stunned, unconscious
Senses truesight 500 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Lightning Reflexes. The snipeshrub can take four reactions each round.

Sharpshooter. The snipeshrub's ranged weapon attacks ignore half cover and three-quarters cover.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The snipeshrub takes two different actions from the options below.

Critical Eye. The snipeshrub targets one object or creature it can see. Until the start of its next turn, when the shrub scores a hit against the chosen target, it instead scores a critical hit.

Headshot (Recharge 6). The shrub fires a thorn directly at the head of a creature it is aware of within 500 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 100 piercing damage. This effect passes effortlessly through nonmagical objects and cover, leaving a 6-inch-wide hole in the target.

Ready Shot. The snipeshrub readies four Thorn Snipe actions.

Thorn Snipe. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, range 500 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (3d12 + 7) piercing damage and the target is pushed up to 30 feet away from the snipeshrub. If the target encounters a solid surface that would prevent this movement, it is impaled by the projectile upon the surface and is restrained. A creature can end the condition by taking an action to attempt a DC 17 Strength (Athletics) ability check, removing the thorn on a success.

ACIDSAP GYMPIE

A large willow oozing with caustic acids, the acidsap gympie is a peculiar plant that can kill without ever being encountered. Incapable of movement, these trees draw their foes into range. The burning cloud of acid they produce can dissolve almost any prey, who stumble toward their doom drawn by enticing pheromones. How the gympie produces such potent chemicals is the subject of much speculation among wilderness researchers, for the tree's acids only scald beings of flesh and blood. More than one sinister druid has dreamed of proliferating gympies, making the world a more hospitable place for all manner of flora.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an acidsap gympie with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

ACIDSAP GYMPIE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Acidsap gympies are immobile and deadly. They emit a cloud of corrosive acid over a huge area and are notoriously durable and hard to uproot. You will likely encounter its foul stench and burning acid long before you see the tree.
21	The acidsap gympie's acid cloud gets more and more intense the longer the plant focuses on it, and the gympie can also release pheromones capable of deluding the minds of anyone nearby, compelling them to walk into the acid.
25	The roots of the acidsap gympie protect it from any effect that might move it, even with powerful magic. If you get within 400 feet of the plant, you are at risk of succumbing to its luring pheromones, and 300 feet is the radius of its acidic cloud as well as the wave of poison it can release. Take it down from a great distance, or do not engage at all.

TACTICS

Though it is brutal and deadly, the acidsap gympie is not a difficult creature to use. The harder you make the gympie to find, the more difficult the encounter. Unless they are paying attention to the movement of the Poison Pulse feature, locating a gympie inside a convoluted dungeon or dense forest can prove very difficult. Once the party is within 400 feet—the closer the better—use Luring Pheromone to initiate the fight. Alternate using Poison Pulse and Intensify on all future turns, and once Luring Pheromone recharges, use it a second time. After that, continue alternating abilities until the gympie has used Intensify four times. Then use Poison Pulse and Luring Pheromone until the party is dead or the gympie has been neutralized. Don't forget to apply damage from both the Acid Cloud and the Coated Leaves trait.

The gympie pairs exceptionally well with creatures that are immune to both acid and poison, such as certain powerful fiends. Creatures that are not immune to both damage types are in as much danger as the party from the gympie's abilities.

The Acidsap Gympie

If you catch a whiff of acrid burning in the air, go no farther. You may be near an acidsap gympie, one the most dangerous flora to ever grow on the material plane. The plant emits a constant cloud of acid with a huge radius that corrodes and dissolves any non-plants in its area, and it can produce pheromones uniquely calibrated to bewitch the minds of anything capable of sentient thought. Those who fall under its sway wander into the cloud of acid, delirious and ignorant to the damage it is doing to their bodies until they finally collapse in a pile of melted flesh and bones. An unpleasant end, and one that can be avoided through astute observation of one's surroundings and a healthy dose of caution.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Artillery
Favors: Acid (Protection from), Druids, Range, Sorcerers, Wizards
Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Melee, Rogues, Wisdom (Low)

Easier Tactics – Start the fight with Luring Pheromone when the party is just within the 400-foot range. This gives them a round or two to deal with the condition before anyone crosses into the 300-foot range and starts taking damage. Don't use Intensify until a few rounds into the fight and consider having the gympie skip a turn here and there. Keep the gympie out in the open. It should be obvious to the party where they can find the tree, even if they don't know its exact location.

Harder Tactics – You want to use Luring Pheromone when as many party members as possible are within 300 feet of the gympie or even closer. You can also start using Intensify before the party realizes they are in danger, giving the gympie a fully powered up Acid Cloud when it finally uses Luring Pheromone. These two changes are significant and should make this fight a true challenge.

PLOT HOOKS

Garden Terror. Without warning, an acidsap gympie springs up in the middle of a town square. Regardless of how it got there, it's almost impossible to remove it, and the townsfolk are soon either dead or forced to flee their homes.

The Melting Forest. The party must navigate a forest filled with acidsap gympies. It is said there's a safe route that winds between their acid clouds and is out of range of their pheromones, but can such information truly be trusted? And even if it's accurate, one wrong step could mean disaster.

God Of Death. A tribe of goblins has taken to sacrificing those they capture in their raids to an acidsap gympie. The tribe believes the gympie to be an avatar of their death god who speaks to them, but in truth an evil druid has been manipulating the tribe from behind the scenes. The goblins are too numerous and devoted to take on directly, so an alternative solution must be found.

TREASURE

Should one manage to slay an acidsap gympie, the creature's leaves and their acidic coating can be fashioned into a *wand of acidsap occlusion*. Doing so requires 60 hours of strenuous activity and a successful DC 23 Intelligence (Alchemist Tools) check. The creation of this wand may require additional components or a cost of 12,000 gp, at your discretion. When properly harvested the acidic leaves of a gympie can be sold for 3,000 gp to the right buyer. Rangers, druids, and some clerics who favor a wilderness lifestyle have learned that chewing the leaves results in a pleasant sensation that takes the edge off better than any ale.

Wand of Acidsap Occlusion

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This wand of twisted leaves emits a strong and unpleasant odor that can only be smelled while within 5 feet of it. The wand has 3 charges. As an action, while holding this wand you can expend 1 charge to create a cloud of thick, acidic vapor centered on a point you can see within 60 feet of you. The cloud spreads out, filling a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the point you choose. The cloud's area is heavily obscured, and whenever a creature starts its turn in the cloud, it takes 4d8 acid damage. The cloud lasts for 1 minute and resists all attempts to disperse it, both mundane and magical.

Alternately, you can use an action and expend 1 charge to give yourself or a creature you touch with the wand immunity to acid damage for 8 hours.

The wand cannot regain charges. When the last charge is expended, the wand crumbles to dust and is destroyed.

ECOLOGY

Due to their immobile nature and great power, most beings choose to avoid acidsap gympies rather than confront them. Thankfully these creatures reproduce very infrequently, blossoming every 25 years into beautiful blood red flowers that resemble lilies. For a single season the gimpy does not produce its acidic secretions, allowing its flowers to be pollinated. At the end of the season the gympie produces small fruits that resemble cranberries, which are highly prized by viticulturists for the flavorful wines that can be brewed with the succulent fruits. When not in this relatively peaceful state, a gympie's presence is easily noticed by the lack of fauna and acid burns on inorganic material. These trees exist only to scald and kill anything that gets within their cloud of acidic death. The plant's mechanism for producing the acid is so efficient that it can persist for years without sunlight or water, and a gympie is so hardy that even a root cluster can regrow to full size in a matter of weeks.

ACIDSAP GYMPIE

Gargantuan plant, unaligned

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 370 (19d20 + 171)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	1 (-5)	28 (+9)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +14, Wis +8, Cha +2
Skills Perception +13
Damage Resistances fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities acid, psychic
Condition Immunities deafened, exhaustion, stunned, unconscious
Senses tremorsense 300 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

TRAITS

Acid Cloud. The gympie emits a cloud of noxious acid that corrodes most living creatures. At the start of each of the gympie's turns, each non-plant creature within 300 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Coated Leaves. A creature that touches the gympie or hits it with a melee attack while within 15 feet of the gympie takes 18 (4d8) acid damage.

Deep Roots. The gympie's roots extend deep underground, anchoring it to both the ground and the plane upon which it resides. While it is alive and, on the ground, the gympie cannot be moved from its space by physical or magical means.

ACTIONS

Intensify (4/Short Rest). The gympie spews more acid into the air, increasing the damage of its Acid Cloud feature by 4 (1d8), up to a maximum of 22 (5d8). This benefit lasts for 1 hour.

Luring Pheromone (Recharge 5–6). The gympie emits a cloud of pheromones in a 400-foot radius centered on it. Each creature within the area with a sense of smell must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or be drawn to the gympie for 1 minute. A creature so drawn must spend all its movement on each of its turns to move closer to the gympie by the shortest available route. This effect ends if the creature comes within 5 feet of the gympie, and an affected creature may attempt a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw at the end of each of its turns to end the effect.

Poison Pulse. The gympie unleashes a dense wave of noxious poison, forming a 30-foot-high wave that completely encircles the gympie. At the end of each of the gympie's turns, the wave moves 30 feet away from the gympie in all directions, increasing the size of the affected area accordingly. When a creature comes into contact with the wave for the first time on its turn or starts its turn within the area, it takes 21 (6d6) poison damage. The wave moves around corners and through any air-permeable objects and structures until it has traveled 300 feet away from the gympie, at which point it dissipates.

Elemental Archons

Elemental archons are extraordinary beings that arise when the soul of a powerful mortal travels to one of the elemental planes by accident or lack of faith. Most souls sent to the elemental planes are lost and destroyed, but when a mortal of great ability passes to these planes, they become its master. The soul wraps itself in the elements, animating them under its control. This exertion of will is poorly received by the plane, and while such realms are hardly sentient, they have a natural negative reaction to authority. The soul is expelled, landing on another plane as an elemental archon. The spirit "controlling" each archon determines its motives and actions once it arrives: some seek battle as a means to die and travel to the proper afterlife, others pursue the same agenda as in life and track down old foes, while some simply roam the world, lost and confused.



The Ice Archon

The cold disposition of an ice archon makes for poor company. They think of themselves as royalty, though if asked they can't explain exactly where or whom they rule. This does not stop them from attempting to lead everything they come across, always with an inflated sense of self-importance. Unfortunately, few creatures possess the strength to resist, for the penalty for disobeying an ice archon is always death. It is essential to these creatures that they be seen as figures deserving of worship and affection. They will sculpt their bodies into attractive shapes according to the cultures they interact with, seeking compliments on their appearance with naked vanity. Be prepared to be talked down to when in conversation with an ice archon. It takes extraordinary willpower to not chafe at their condescending demeanor, so make sure you practice.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Soldier

Favors: Druids, Fire (Damage), Monks, Sorcerers, Wisdom (High)

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Attacks, Paladins, Rogues



ICE ARCHON

Elegant ice sculptures come to life, ice archons carry themselves with a noble air, lording over whatever creatures are unfortunate enough to cross their path. Their bodies glisten like diamonds, carved into the facsimile of royal regalia. Ice archons are formed by the souls of those with a heightened sense of their own importance and the will to control those they see as lesser. Most are fallen monarchs, barons, presidents, and other rulers whose lack of compassion in life bound their cold hearts into elemental shape. Ice archons are proud and will make (and keep) deals struck with those who show them respect and deference. To those who act with disrespect, they are an implacable foe. Their voices resonate with cold authority, incapable of compromise or mercy.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an ice archon with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

ICE ARCHON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Legend tells of a king whose soul traveled to the plane of water rather than to its true destination. So strong was the king's will that he froze the water around him and strode forth in a new body carved of ice. He made himself a crown and a spear and traveled the material plane, issuing dictates requiring extreme force of will to resist.
21	Ice archons are formed from the souls of fallen magnates, and they defend themselves with icy shields and strong wills. Their shields provide powerful resistance but can be burned through with concerted fire damage, leaving them vulnerable for a time. They are skilled with their spears and make mighty charging attacks that leave lasting injuries.
28	Ice archons respond well to praise and respect. Though they are skilled liars, they are much less talented at detecting the lies of others, and feigned deference will get you in their good graces quickly. They are most likely to honor a deal made with someone they believe respects them, and they are quick to betray those who speak rudely.

TACTICS

The ice archon isn't much of a solo monster—like any good ruler it depends on minions and loyal servants. The archon should focus its Dictate ability on disabling powerful threats: any enemy that can deal non-physical damage at range. Save Yield Before Me for the first time the ice archon's shield is destroyed to compensate for the loss of its best defense. When choosing targets for the archon's Spear attack, try to move far enough to use Charge whenever possible, but don't take opportunity attacks. The archon hates those. When building an encounter around an ice archon, you can be liberal with its minions. Almost any sentient creature could conceivably serve an ice archon, and even beasts can be tamed by a combination of food and the archon's Dictate ability. The ice archon benefits most from powerful melee creatures to keep the party away from it and ranged backup to pour on the damage, especially creatures with area-of-effect attacks. A helpful spellcaster is never a bad thing, but the archon is tough and has exceptional saving throws, so it's not essential..

Easier Tactics – The best way to make this fight easier is to make poor choices when using Dictate, targeting sorcerers, bards, warlocks, and paladins. They're likely to succeed on their saving throws and not miss a turn. Don't use Charge every chance you get; the basic Spear attacks are still dangerous. Keep the archon's minions on the weak side, preferring straightforward creatures with poor synergy with each other and the archon.

Harder Tactics – Dictate can completely shut down a character with poor Wisdom saving throws. Many troublesome characters can be neutralized by focusing Dictate on them each turn. The ice archon is most useful as a control creature that can take a lot of damage before it falls, so try to keep it alive as long as possible. If it has a clear shot at using Charge, take it, and don't forget to leverage the 10-foot reach of its Spear to stay out of danger when maneuvering around the battlefield.

TALIEN'S NOTES

I am continually frustrated by all attempts at communication with these "elemental archons." They exist in a state between life and death, their minds trapped in flux. Traditional means of communication with both the living and the dead have met with spectacular failure, though I have divined that some fragment of their souls' original personalities remain. One can witness these creatures engaging in distinctly mortal behavior, such as attempting to eat or having a desire for physical intimacy. This is but a shadow of what once was, an inconsistent variable that comes and goes like the tide, at best a curiosity, and at worst inspiring false hope in appealing to a nature that does not exist. You have been warned.

PLOT HOOKS

Founding an Empire. A castle of ice and snow pops up during winter, and an ice archon declares itself a new ruler. It offers immigration incentives and begins attracting some dissatisfied peasants from nearby nations. For now, this isn't a problem, but rumors spread of mistreatment and lots of frostbite.

You Shall Not Pass. The party finds themselves attempting to cross an ice archon's domain, and it requires tribute. They can acquiesce to its demands and go on a side quest or fight their way through, but the ice archon has enlisted the help of a white dragon for backup.

A-questing We Shall Go! An ice archon is born of a questing knight, and it travels the land seeking to start a new organization of would-be heroes to embark on dangerous adventures. This might be a good thing, though

some doubt has been cast after the gang of heroes stir up more trouble than they can handle, leaving chaos in their wake.

TREASURE

A fallen ice archon melts, leaving behind only its crown. The crown persists for 30 days and then melts. Selling the crown is difficult if the buyer is aware of its limited lifespan, but if the party doesn't want to lie about it, they might find a group of adventurers about to venture into snowy territory who would be grateful for its protection. It is worth about 10,000 gp, but buyers will do their best to negotiate a lower price.

Frozen Crown

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Attuning to the crown requires feeling worthy of a noble title. If you sincerely feel deserving of rulership, that is enough to satisfy the crown, but it knows if you are lying. Once attuned, you gain immunity to cold damage. Once per day as a bonus action, you can issue a command as the command spell, with a spell save DC of 20.

ECOLOGY

Once formed on the plane of water, an ice archon immediately seeks the company of other creatures. This instinct is not out of loneliness or a need for companionship but to satisfy a desire to be obeyed and worshipped by lesser beings. Unfortunately, the watery realm of its home plane is not conducive to empire building, forcing the archon to seek out more pliable domains. On other planes an ice archon prefers cooler climates, but never cold enough to deter large-scale civilizations. These creatures completely fail to recognize the authority of others, claiming land with impunity and no regard for the consequences. Many of an ice archon's "subjects" become so involuntarily, suffering under a series of bizarre laws enacted to glorify the elemental's existence rather than enforce rule of law. Nonetheless, ice archons are fearsome leaders and will quickly amass a flourishing kingdom when left to their own devices.

EARTH ARCHON

Dumpy and pondering, earth archons embody the endurance of stone and the indomitability of the land. Like a muddy hill come to life, these elementals possess few defining physical features beyond their lumbering

ICE ARCHON

Medium elemental, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor) or 22 (with Ice Shield)
Hit Points 228 (24d8 + 120)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +11, Wis +12, Cha +12
Skills Insight +18, Intimidation +18, Perception +12, Persuasion +12
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Damage Immunities cold, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages Aquan, Primordial, and up to three other languages
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Charge. If the archon moves at least 15 feet in a straight line toward a target and hits it with a Spear attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 38 (7d10) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it suffers a crippling injury. A creature with a crippling injury can take an action or a bonus action on each of its turns, but not both. The injury lasts until the target magically regains hit points, or until a creature treats the wound by taking an action to succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

Ice Shield. The archon is shrouded in a layer of thick ice, granting it a +4 bonus to its AC and resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage (included in the statistics above). If the archon takes 40 or more fire damage in a single round, the layer of ice melts and these benefits are lost. The archon regains these benefits when it finishes a short or long rest.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The archon uses Dictate and then makes a Spear attack.

Dictate. The archon chooses one creature it can see within 120 feet that can hear it and issues a command. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or follow the command on its next turn. The command can be one of the following options. If the target can't follow the command, the effect ends.

- *Take a Knee.* The target falls prone and cannot stand up until the start of its next turn.
- *Flee.* The target takes the Dash action and moves away from the archon by the most direct means possible.
- *Betray.* The target must spend its movement to move toward its nearest ally and must make a single attack against that ally.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 33 (6d10) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 20 feet away from the archon.

Yield Before Me (1/Short Rest). The archon declares its absolute authority in all matters to all creatures within 120 feet of it. All creatures that can hear and understand the archon must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to submit to the archon's authority for 1 minute. An affected creature cannot willingly make attacks or affect other creatures with hostile effects. At the end of each of its turns, an affected creature can attempt a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

humanoid shape. Earth archons are formed by the souls of those who died protecting someone they love. It need not be romantic love—a devoted knight who falls in service to a king would qualify—but, unlike most archons, it is the intensity of the passion that matters more than the power of the mortal. More than one earth archon has formed from the soul of a kind grandparent who sacrificed a last bit of food for a hungry child. This origin gives earth archons a much kinder temperament than their other elemental kin. They don't seek out opportunities to get involved in the world's affairs, but they are much more likely to join a good cause, particularly one that won't succeed without their help. They are, unfortunately, not good at seeing through lies. Earth archons are frequently duped into serving nefarious ends, though should the truth come out they will not rest until they exact retribution on their deceivers.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an earth archon with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

EARTH ARCHON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Earth archons are mighty elemental spirits animated by the souls of powerful mortals who went to the wrong plane. They are extremely resilient to physical attack and can pass effortlessly through anything of earth or stone.
22	Earth archons consume weapons that hit them, disarming their attackers. The archons can hold more weapons than would physically fit within them, a mystery that remains unsolved.
27	Earth archons can bind their foes within twisting roots and deal tremendous damage with the heavy rocks they favor in melee combat. When wounded, they retreat beneath the earth with surprising speed.

TACTICS

Earth archons are as simple in battle as they are at any other time. They are a little faster than the average humanoid but are better served entering battle from beneath the ground using their burrowing speed and Superior Earth Glide. In a fight an earth archon wants to get close to as many characters as possible to use Twisting Roots and Stone Flail to full effect. Attacking a restrained character with Stone Flail makes the attack much less likely to miss, and with only one attack every turn, a miss hurts a lot. The archon has no fear of melee combat between its resistance to physical damage and Hungry Earth trait, and it actively seeks out powerful combatants to neutralize them by taking hits. Though unarmed strikes are technically melee weapons, don't let the earth archon pull anyone's hands off. When building an encounter around an earth archon, look for monsters that have ranged attacks and supporting spells. The earth archon is vulnerable to disabling spells such as *forcecage*, and having allies who can disrupt concentration or cast *counterspell* will help the archon do what it does best.

Easier Tactics – Don't sneak into the back line; just charge the front. A raging barbarian or well-armored paladin can go toe to toe with an earth archon for at least a few rounds, and they have the hit points and high Constitution saving throws to endure some hits of Stone Flail. They are vulnerable to Twisting Roots, but if the archon stays far enough away that only the front line is hit, it won't make the encounter too challenging.

Harder Tactics – An ambush by an earth archon is devastating. It can spring up and use Twisting Roots to target the entire party, then hit somebody fragile with its Stone Flail attack. If you want to get tricky, once it restrains a couple of fragile characters, have the archon burrow 10 feet into the ground and start moving through the earth, dragging the restrained characters with it. If the party is busy dealing with other monsters, being split up like this is catastrophic.

The Earth Archon

Of all the subjects I expected to research when penning this book, love was certainly not high on my list. This mysterious emotion is the foundation upon which an earth archon forms—they are beings that abhor weapons and are slow to start fights. They are too slow to start just about anything really, save for defending themselves. Striking them in close combat is not recommended—they have an appetite for weaponry and can consume a startling amount of metal. There's no sight quite like a regiment of disarmed soldiers standing helpless while an earth archon slips beneath the ground, its body full of clanking weaponry. Provided you have good intentions, earth archons are the least dangerous of their kind. They are not much for small talk, preferring to judge others by their actions. If they witness good deeds in their eyes, they will leave well enough alone.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute
Favors: Flight, Mobility (High), Monks, Rangers, Warlocks
Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Melee, Paladins, Structures

PLOT HOOKS

Groundskeeper. A city's garden blooms with new life *and* new rodents that are causing untold problems in the nearby food silos. An earth archon has taken up residence in the garden and every exterminator hired to deal with the vermin problem has disappeared.

Zealous Defender. An overwhelming army lays siege to a small castle, and just when defeat seems inevitable, an earth archon rises out of the ground and obliterates the army. It declares the city under its protection, but it doesn't always correctly identify threats. A food caravan that runs over a rabbit would face the archon's wrath, for example.

Green Thumb. A forest suffers under a raging fire, and an earth archon along with a team of dryads moves in to help it heal. No humanoids may pass through the forest while it mends, lest they face the archon in battle.

TREASURE

When an earth archon dies, it releases every weapon and object it ever absorbed. Roll 1d8 and consult the table for the loot within a particular earth archon.

EARTH ARCHON TREASURE TABLE

D8	TREASURE
1–3	Three daggers, two longswords, four halberds, plus 6,000 gp worth of gemstones divided between opals, sapphires, and aquamarine.
4–5	One greataxe, six short swords, plus 8,800 gp worth of gemstones divided between peridot, topaz, and tiger eye.
6–7	Two greatswords, one heavy crossbow, three lances, plus 10,200 gp worth of gemstones divided between fire opal, emerald, and rubies.
8	One shovel, two war picks, one whip, one maul, plus 22,500 gp worth of gemstones divided between diamonds and moonstones.

ECOLOGY

Earth archons seek out the weak and downtrodden—those who can't defend themselves—and they love the creatures of the forest. Birds, squirrels, and other small critters often rest on an earth archon while the elemental is stationary. The archon sometimes attracts lesser earthen beings, such as mephits, gargoyles, or dao, but it rarely keeps them as permanent companions. How earth archons escape their home plane is a cause for much speculation, as their presence on the material plane is at odds with the natural order. Wherever earth archons venture, they just can't quite seem to fit in. Every action they take is made with clear intentions but always seems to go wrong somehow. This makes the elementals morose and confused as they fail to understand much of what occurs around them.

EARTH ARCHON

Huge elemental, neutral good

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 324 (24d12 + 168)
Speed 20 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29 (+9)	6 (-2)	25 (+7)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +15, Con +13, Wis +8
Skills Nature +14, Perception +8
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Primordial, Terran
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Hungry Earth (1/Turn). When a creature hits the archon with a melee weapon it is holding, the archon can attempt to absorb the weapon. The wielder must succeed on a DC 23 Strength saving throw or have the weapon pulled from the wielder's hands and into the archon's space. A weapon can be removed from the archon's body by a creature within 5 feet of the archon taking an action to attempt a DC 23 Strength (Athletics) check, removing the weapon on a success.

Superior Earth Glide. The archon can burrow through any solid terrain or object that is composed of at least 75 percent earth or stone. The archon can choose to deal 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage to anything it passes through for every 5 feet it moves in this manner.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The archon uses its Twisting Roots (if available), then makes one Stone Flail attack.

Stone Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 53 (8d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of its next turn.

Twisting Roots (Recharge 5–6). Each creature on the ground within 15 feet of the archon must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or be grappled by thick roots (escape DC 23). These roots are attached to the archon, and if a creature grappled by this feature is more than 15 feet away from the archon, but not more than 200 feet away, it is immediately pulled to the nearest unoccupied space within 15 feet of the archon.

REACTIONS

Earth Dive (Recharge 5–6). As a reaction when the archon is reduced to less than half its hit point maximum or takes damage while below half its hit point maximum, it may immediately burrow up to its burrowing speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

FIRE ARCHON

Living furnaces with frightening martial power, fire archons embrace the heat of battle in the most literal of senses. Hungry for combat, these elementals dramatically increase in temperature as they fight, culminating in a colossal explosion that brings about a glorious end. However, should this death occur anywhere but the elemental plane of fire, a fire archon will always return hungry for more. These elementals are blessed with the primordial fire of the elemental planes, which can burn hotter than the sun and overcome any defense. These beings rarely speak, their voices erupting in a pitched roar at deafening volumes.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a fire archon with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

FIRE ARCHON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Archons are powerful elementals with potent abilities and powerful weapons. Fire archons, in particular, possess rudimentary sentience but are challenging to communicate with. Warm-blooded creatures cannot hide from them.
22	Fire archons are born of passionate souls and bloodthirsty warriors. They channel fire through their pitchforks, ensnaring their foes in battle, and can project a beam of intense heat that burns away any defenses.
27	Like their lesser cousins, engaging a fire archon in melee is a dangerous proposition. As the battle goes on, they only get hotter. Left unchecked, they will detonate in a supernova of destructive force.

TACTICS

The fire archon is a tough melee brute that can move quickly around the battlefield. It is at its best in close combat with multiple foes, using its pitchfork to restrain as many foes as it can and staying just close enough to keep them in range of its Superheated Being trait. The longer the fight goes on, the more dangerous that trait becomes, both to the party and to any allies of the fire archon who aren't immune to fire damage. You should use Incinerate any time you can hit at least three targets with it. If the party has a lot of characters with resistance or immunity to fire damage, you should make using Incinerate a priority to open them up to damage from the archon's other attacks. Finally, unless the archon has a good reason to fight to the death, it should try to retreat when its Superheated Being trait reaches a radius of 40 feet. When building an encounter around a fire archon, select allied monsters with care, particularly if they are not at least resistant to fire damage. Creatures that are vulnerable to fire damage are likely to die much faster in the company of a fire archon, but it can make for an interesting free-for-all fight.

Easier Tactics – Don't move into the middle of the party; instead, keep the archon at the edge, engaging the tougher characters. Don't use Incinerate until later in the fight, and even if it recharges, wait a few turns before using it a second time. Be willing to target characters with resistance to fire damage, but the archon should still avoid those who are immune until it can hit them with Incinerate.

Harder Tactics – Start the fight with Incinerate, especially if the archon has a good initiative result. Get up in the middle of the group as quickly as possible and try to restrain characters with Pitchfork to keep them in a tight group. Superheated Being rapidly becomes an amazing source of damage, and each time Incinerate recharges, take the opportunity attacks to move into a good position to hit multiple targets. Remember that restrained characters have disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws.

PLOT HOOKS

True Discipline. A great warrior dies in the line of duty, guarding the grave of his lord. A week later, a fire archon shows up, ready to resume its post, though with far more aggressive disposition.

Flames of Scorn. When a noble rebukes a bard's advances, the bard disappears. Several months pass, and then a fire archon courts the noble and sets the gardens on fire with relentless determination.

The Fire Archon

The fire archon shares little in common with the humble fire elemental beyond its incendiary composition. It is armored with layers of igneous rock and wields a pitchfork made of the same. While their hefty figures imply they are slow, this is a ruse. They are so fleet of foot that my monk companion, Slate, struggled to outpace one for more than a few seconds. It has been my observance that fire archons coalesce from the souls of violent warriors that fought with great passion. If you encounter one of these creatures, it's as likely to be the remnants of a bloodthirsty warlord as it is to be a warrior poet who drank too much and courted the wrong paramour. I have heard the colloquialism, "A candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long," which I believe is quite applicable to the existence of fire archons. I rarely hear of one living longer than a few weeks.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Dexterity (High), Range, Rangers, Rogues, Warlocks

Foils: Barbarians, Fire (Damage), Melee, Paladins, Sorcerers

Tag Team. A red dragon teams up with a fire archon to inflict maximum carnage. The dragon drops the archon like a bomb alongside a gout of flame then swoops in to join the melee. The dragon has been using the archon to melt into banks, while the archon is just in it for the thrill of battle.

TREASURE

Fire archon ashes are of tremendous use to alchemists and spellcasters. The ashes of a single fire archon can be sold for 2,500 gp. Alternatively, when casting a spell that deals fire damage a spellcaster can use the entire remains of a fire archon to cause the spell to deal maximum damage on all of its damage dice that deal fire damage for that spell's duration. When used in this manner, the ashes are consumed by the spell's casting.

ECOLOGY

Lacking the ability to travel between the planes, fire archons must seek out other creatures to get where they are going. From its birth on the elemental plane of fire, a fire archon is on a mission, typically toward some conflict it remembers in life. Fire archons attract the company of fire-immune creatures looking to instigate some arson. Elementals, fiends, dragons, or fire giants are all common companions. With their tremendous power and force of will, the fire archon is likely to be leading the group unless traveling with a truly powerful creature, or unless the soul of the fire archon was loyal to the creature in life. Fire archons don't lead in a conscious, vocal way; they simply follow their hearts and other creatures tag along, fighting when the archon fights and resting when it rests.

LIGHTNING ARCHON

Beings composed of pure lightning with an excitable personality to match, lightning archons are among the fastest beings in existence. Their forms warp and twist with electrical energy, forming a vaguely humanoid shape for but an instant before returning to a chaotic, sparking mass. The true origins of a lightning archon are in the irrationality and impulsiveness of the soul. Those with great power who are quick to use it are most likely to become lightning archons, and they take little of their morality with them. Lightning archons delight in the use of their abilities and tend to attack the first things they see. They also enjoy springing ambushes and will hide for days waiting for a tempting target to pass by. Their voices are difficult to discern, sounding like screeching metal charged with electricity.

FIRE ARCHON

Huge elemental, chaotic good (50%) or chaotic evil (50%)

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 300 (24d12 + 144)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	26 (+8)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +10, Dex +14, Con +12, Wis +11
Skills Insight +11, Perception +11
Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., Sense Heat (see traits) 300 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Ignan, Primordial
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

TRAITS

Sense Heat. The archon perceives all sources of heat within 300 feet of it. The archon knows the exact location of creatures with a body temperature above freezing as though it had blindsight.

Stoke the Core. At the start of each of the archon's turns, if there is an enemy creature within 60 feet of it, the radius of its Superheated Being trait increases by 5 feet. Additionally, when a creature takes damage from that trait, it takes an additional 11 (2d10) fire damage. This effect is cumulative and resets when the archon finishes a short or long rest.

When the radius of the archon's Superheated Being trait is increased to 50 feet or more as a result of this trait, the archon explodes in a 120-foot-radius sphere, killing it instantly. Everything in the area must attempt a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Superheated Being. At the start of each of the archon's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 22 (4d10) fire damage. A creature that touches the archon or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 22 (4d10) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Incinerate (Recharge 5–6). The archon fires a beam of white-hot plasma in a 300-foot line that is 15 feet wide. Everything in the line must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or lose any resistance or immunity to fire damage for 1 minute and take 55 (10d10) fire damage. A success prevents the loss of resistance or immunity to fire damage and halves the damage.

Pitchfork. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 22 (4d10) fire damage, and the target is encased in igneous rock and restrained. While restrained the creature cannot magically teleport or regain hit points. As an action, the target can attempt a DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check, freeing itself on a success.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a lightning archon with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

LIGHTNING ARCHON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
19	Lightning archons are incredibly fast beings that attack first and never ask questions. There is no record of a successful negotiation with a lightning archon.
23	Lightning archons dart in and out of combat, electrocuting creatures they pass by and leaving a residual charge that makes them more vulnerable to future attacks. Striking at them with a metal weapon is dangerous, dealing damage to the wielder with each hit. Resonance the archon creates may reflect targeted magical effects back on their casters.
28	Lightning archons prefer targets wearing metal armor and can hit even the most well-armored targets with deadly precision. They are skilled ambushers and can render themselves invisible without the aid of magic. Only those with truly keen senses will detect them before it's too late.

TACTICS

Lightning archons are at their most powerful when moving rapidly among the party, using their fast flying speed to pass through as many characters as possible and then hitting them all with Thunderbolt when available, or targeting two with Jolt. They're going to take a lot of opportunity attacks from doing so, but if the characters taking the attacks have metal weapons, it's worth it. Always target characters with metal armor first. Finally, with their Stealth bonus being so high and their Clear Skies ability allowing them to hide without cover, lightning archons can launch extremely dangerous ambush attacks. Lightning archons always fight to the death and don't negotiate, though if they spot a party with no metal items they may decide to ignore them, unless it's been too long since their last fight.

Easier Tactics – Don't attack from hiding, and don't energize the whole party. Focus on one or two characters using Jolt, and only use Thunderbolt when it won't hit more than two characters. If the party has characters without metal armor or who have non-metal weapons, be sure to provoke opportunity attacks from them often, as that's a safe way for the party to deal damage.

Harder Tactics – Ambushes are a great way to start harder encounters. Start this one with a Thunderbolt that hits as many characters as possible, and then focus the archon's attacks on ranged characters and spellcasters. Once it's just melee characters left standing, the archon has little to fear and can fly in circles above them, raining down electric death. The archon's incredible speed affords it the ability to stay out of range of most opponents for the entirety of a fight.

PLOT HOOKS

Thunderstruck. Everyone who travels a mountain pass is being struck by lightning and killed instantly, with no sign of the perpetrator. The local druids attribute it to nature fighting back against civilization, but in reality, a lightning archon is waiting there and cackling to itself as it kills anyone who trespasses in its domain.

Supercharged. A powerful sorcerer binds a lightning archon into an iron golem, granting it incredible speed and access to the archon's attacks. The elemental understandably takes issue with its confinement and constantly screams from within the golem, begging for release.

Race for the Ages. A lightning archon enters into a famous marathon, completely oblivious to the rules against flying and killing the other runners. In the days leading up to the event the archon grows increasingly erratic, leading the organizers to consider shutting down the world-famous run.

TREASURE

A deceased lightning archon leaves behind crystallized sand, called fulgurite, that retains some of the archon's power. It can be sold for 1,200 gp, or the energized fulgurite can be fashioned into a Lightning Anchor, a charm worn as an amulet or ring that protects its wearer and nearby allies from natural lightning storms.

Lightning Anchor

Wondrous item, very rare

The *lightning anchor* absorbs the energy from lightning bolts. Whenever you or a creature within 30 feet of you would be struck by lightning, the lightning hits the *lightning anchor* instead, which absorbs the bolt entirely. This ability only functions on natural lightning bolts rather than lightning damage from magical effects (however, lightning from a *call lightning* spell or the storm associated with use of *control weather* will charge the amulet). For each lightning bolt absorbed in this way, the *lightning anchor* gains 1 charge, up to a maximum of 3. You can spend 1 charge as a reaction when you or a creature within 30 feet of you would take lightning damage to prevent that damage entirely.

ECOLOGY

Born on the plane of air, lightning archons make their way to other worlds in search of adventure. They prefer wide open spaces where they can move freely, abhorring confinement in all its forms. Associating with a lightning archon is dangerous, as even the smallest of disagreements can quickly escalate out of control. Lightning archons gather in small groups of two or three, presenting a great danger to anyone and anything nearby. When not hunting something, they can be seen flying, throwing lightning at each other, and laughing. Rarely can lightning archons be compelled to serve a cause other than themselves. Such archons must be well compensated for their efforts, typically in the form of absolute freedom to conduct itself however it wishes without fear of reprisal.

The Lightning Archon

Real lightning looks like molasses next to one of these fearsome elementals. These are by far the fastest creatures encountered on my travels, with nothing else even coming close. Don't bother running, flying, or riding away if one catches you out in the open—only magical escape has a chance of success. I am uncertain as to the nature of a soul required to form a lightning archon. The creatures are too erratic to be of much help, and the transition is so extreme as to leave almost no room for association. My speculations are thus: brilliant geniuses and masterful martial artists, possessing of lighting wit and an overpowering ambitious streak. I have yet to strike up a productive conversation with a lightning archon. If you manage to accomplish such a task, please mail your findings to the address in the back of this book, and you will be well compensated for aiding my research efforts.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Druids, Hit Points (High), Lightning (Protection from), Wizards

Foils: AC (High), Clerics, Dexterity (Low), Fighters

LIGHTNING ARCHON

Medium elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18
Hit Points 234 (36d8 + 72)
Speed 10 ft., fly 240 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	26 (+8)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +15, Int +11, Wis +12, Cha +8
Skills Acrobatics +22, Perception +19, Stealth +15
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities lightning, poison, thunder
Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 29
Languages Auran, Primordial
Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

TRAITS

Arc Lightning. The archon has advantage on attacks against creatures wearing metal armor, and its attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 18–20. If the archon scores a critical hit on a creature, it may immediately use its bonus action to make an additional attack against a creature within range that it has not attacked that turn.

Clear Skies. The archon can suppress its lightning as a bonus action, turning invisible. This effect lasts until the archon attacks or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

Plasma Core. When a creature hits the archon with a melee weapon made of any quantity of metal, the creature takes 13 (2d12) lightning damage. Additionally, the archon sheds bright light within 120 feet, and dim light out to 240 feet. While invisible, the archon's Plasma Core feature is suppressed.

Shocking Charge. The archon can enter a hostile creature's space but cannot end its turn there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 19 (3d12) lightning damage and becomes energized until the start of the archon's next turn. Energized creatures suffer additional effects from the archon's Jolt attack.

Ultimate Evasion. If the archon succeeds on a saving throw and suffers an effect on a success, it instead suffers no effect.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The archon makes two Jolt attacks against two different targets.

Jolt. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 34 (4d12 + 8) lightning damage. If the target is energized (via the Shocking Charge feature), the target cannot have resistance or be immune to damage dealt by this attack and must succeed on a DC 23 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the end of its next turn.

Thunderbolt (Recharge 4–6). The archon magically teleports to a point it can see within 500 feet, emitting a blast of thunder in a 30-foot-radius sphere when it appears. Creatures of the archon's choice within the area must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or take 52 (8d12) thunder damage, or half as much on a success. If a creature fails the saving throw and is also energized (via the Shocking Charge feature), it is permanently deafened and knocked unconscious until the end of its next turn.

REACTIONS

Reflect Magic. As a reaction when the archon succeeds on a saving throw against a spell or magical effect, it may target a different creature within 60 feet of it as though the original caster had targeted that creature with the spell.

Enokitake

Deep in a forest glade, ambulatory mushrooms conduct strange rituals fed by detritus and dead animals. These are the enokitake, which form a collectivist society where the emotions of each individual are shared and understood by all members of the community. This empathic existence makes these simple living plant creatures, who do no harm unless absolutely necessary, highly sensitive to other beings. Known as the "shepherds of life," enokitake are well respected by those who abhor suffering and love peace. They are the ultimate symbiotic lifeform, forming a mutually beneficial relationship with all who are willing to share the values of compassion. Many long-suffering souls have found peace in the care of these dedicated healers, horticulturalists, and purveyors of wisdom. When in grave danger, enokitake selflessly sacrifice their flesh to combine into a singular, massive fungus that rises high above the tree line. Known as an ostoyae, this communal creature marches forward to protect the tribe, the community sharing in its collective pain. True to their nonviolent nature, violence is never celebrated by the enokitake, who mourn the loss of both friend and foe.

ENOKITAKE

Individual enokitake are humanoid in shape with flesh of spongy mycelluim, and their heads are the caps of colorful mushrooms that change according to the creature's mood. They typically adorn themselves in simple garb functional for their lifestyle, with stone beads and jewelry indicating their age. It takes a great effort to provoke enokitake, who see negative emotions as harmful as any blade. Enokitake share their feelings freely and place a high value on understanding others on a deep emotional level. Those foolish enough to engage in violence find enokitake perfectly capable of defending themselves, always willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the colony.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Finally, a creature that isn't a nightmare and a half to get data on. While the enokitake are difficult to find, it is well worth the effort. These creatures are peaceful almost to the point of absurdity, living a communal existence that necessitates intimacy. I found the enokitake sympathetic and sensitive to my emotions like no humanoid ever was, compelling me to share my most private thoughts and feelings. It was an almost...spiritual experience. For the troubled, desperate, or lonely, I recommend a brief therapeutic stay among these fungal life forms. Prolonged exposure to their empathic abilities can be stressful, however, as you lose any sense of privacy about your emotional state. I can think of more than a few adventuring companions who would not appreciate the enokitake's compassionate, hands-on approach to negative emotions. Pain and suffering can have merits, but to the enokitake such feelings afflict their entire community.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an enokitake with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

ENOKITAKE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
13	Commonly considered harmless, the enokitake are shepherds and stewards of the forests. They consume dead plants and animals and replenish the soil, preparing it for a new cycle of growth. They are sentient and compassionate but will defend themselves with violence if attacked.
17	With keen empathic insight, enokitake are hard to deceive. They can read the intentions of those who approach; they respond well to those who mean well and react aggressively to those with violence in their hearts. They wield spears which they can brandish in melee or throw from range.
21	Enokitake are not individually dangerous, but they can merge to form a much larger creature called an ostoyae. Once formed, this massive mushroom fights alongside its smaller kin in defense of their tribe.

TACTICS

Enokitake operate in unison, relying on overwhelming numbers and perfect coordination rather than individual tactical brilliance. The Bonds of Kinship trait allows them to keep perfect track of their allies, and with blindsight out to 60 feet, they can operate extremely well in areas of darkness or dense fog. Such natural terrain often surrounds their lairs and gives them a substantial advantage in combat.

It is rare for enokitake to be present in combat without the support of an ostoyae. Three or more enokitake can form an ostoyae as part of the Sacrifice action, and that should always be the first thing they do in battle unless the party is low level (see "Easier Tactics"). The rest of the enokitake remain as individuals to provide support.

Without any special abilities, each enokitake tries to get within 20 feet of the biggest threat and make two ranged Spear attacks. Their Empathic Node trait gives them insight into the emotional state of such creatures, and if the enokitake detect any reticence to fight, they may try to cease hostilities. But if diplomacy fails, the enokitake fight to the death.



The Enokitake

Wriggling and twisting fungal creatures, enokitake are nonetheless charming. They possess a deeply communal living structure, operating in leaderless tribes that function under continual consensus. Some theologians study them, hoping to get a better understanding of the concept of "oneness" as it pertains to enlightenment and our place in the multiverse. For the more practically minded, I say this: don't make an enemy of the enokitake. They are isolationists by nature and will live and let live unless you start a fight. Once you do, they resort quickly to extreme measures, and they have no fear of death.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Soldier

Favors: Plants (Targeting), Range, Sorcerers, Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Bards, Clerics, Monks, Sight-Blocking, Spells (Enchantment)

Easier Tactics – Don't form an ostoyae. With a challenge rating of 16, the ostoyae is a major threat, much more dangerous than the three enokitake that comprise it. Have the enokitake use Sacrifice to save their fallen comrades. This is both easier and much more tragic, and it will likely evoke an emotional response from your players.

Harder Tactics – Start the fight with an ostoyae already formed, and have several enokitake hiding. With a bonus of +8 on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, they can conceal themselves quite effectively. Beyond that, your best bet for making the fight harder is to use terrain that favors the enokitake, usually involving a lot of heavily obscured fog.

PLOT HOOKS

Exodus. A group of enokitake have fled their home and are immigrating to more fertile lands. The journey is proving difficult for the peaceful mushroom people, who are encountering swathes of negative emotions along the journey. Completely overwhelmed by their own empathic abilities, the caravan may soon succumb to the stress of their exodus.

Paradise Lost. A lone enokitake has been kidnapped from its tribe and sold to a traveling circus. The community is distraught over this fate and are offering a lifetime supply of mushroom wine for the return of its lost citizen.

Cultural Misunderstanding. The king was slain by a wild boar while on a hunting trip, and in the confusion enokitake took the body back to their colony for recycling. Understandably upset, the empire demands the return of the king's body so he may be properly laid to rest. Utterly confused, the enokitake have retreated further into isolation and cut off all contact with the outside world.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN – THE WORLD NEEDS ENOKITAKE

Unless your players are running a party of vicious bastards, chances are most encounters with enokitake can be resolved peacefully. In a bestiary full of a deadly threats, it may seem counterintuitive to make use of these creatures. However, not every monster encounter needs to result in an epic throw-down, especially at high levels. Monsters that aren't just foes to be massacred are great for encounters, as long as they provide a compelling alternative. Having monsters like enokitake in your game world is important. They breath life into its deepest corners, teaching your players that between tyrannous dragons and vile fiends there are interesting beings full of mystery and wonder. Enokitake are designed to make an impression on your players, whether through combat, roleplay, or story. Our hope is that a good experience with creatures like these will inspire you to make more like them, filling your world with beings that are not mere walking loot and experience piñatas. They can be something special around which the party has a deep emotional experience.

ENOKITAKE

Medium plant, lawful neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +5
Skills Nature +4, Stealth +8, Survival +5
Damage Resistances poison, psychic
Condition Immunities stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages sign language
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

TRAITS

Bonds of Kinship. The enokitake is both an individual and part of a greater being. The enokitake always knows and understands other members of its tribe on a deep personal and physical level, and immediately notices if anything is abnormal about another member of its tribe (such as if it is is damaged or under the influence of a harmful magical effect) as soon as it becomes aware of it. The enokitake may not know the exact nature of the abnormality but always has a general sense of what is wrong.

Empathic Node. The enokitake can sense the emotions of other creatures within 60 feet of it, and it knows the emotional state of such creatures unless they take great efforts to conceal them. Creatures within this area have disadvantage on Charisma (Deception) ability checks against the enokitake.

Symbiosis. The enokitake can merge its body and mind with those of other creatures by using its Sacrifice action. Depending on the nature of the creature with which it is merging, when it does so the enokitake causes the following effects.

- When the enokitake merges with a creature that is not a member of its tribe, it dies and the affected creature regains hit points equal to the enokitake's current hit points. Additionally, if the affected creature is dead, it is immediately restored to life at 1 hit point.
- When the enokitake merges with a creature that is a member of its tribe, its body and mind become one, restoring that member to full hit points. If an enokitake merges with an ostoyae, instead the ostoyae's statistics immediately adjust to accommodate the new enokitake

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The enokitake makes two Spear attacks.

Sacrifice. The enokitake merges with the body of a living creature within 5 feet of it, causing effects according to its Symbiosis trait. If the enokitake is within 5 feet of two or more willing members of its tribe, their bodies can form an ostoyae.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage.

TREASURE

Enokitake understand the value of currency and precious materials, keeping it all in one place for use by the community. The larger the community, the more treasure it is likely to have, collected from the dead bodies of those they find within their territory. These bodies are composted into a rich nutrient that has a startling effect on local plant life. The enokitake eat the nutrient, but to other species it is useful as a potent fertilizer.

Enokitake's Fantastic Fertilizer

Wondrous item, rare

This 50-pound bag of mulch is pungent and glows with a color-changing light. You can use an action to pull a pound of mulch and throw it up to 20 feet, filling a 5-foot square with the soil. A plant completely within an area affected by the mulch grows to mature age within 24 hours. Plant creatures regain 5d10 hit points for every hour they remain within the area. Once thrown, the effects of the mulch last for 48 hours before becoming inert.

ECOLOGY

Enokitake dwell deep in forests, feeding on the rich biomass from fallen trees and deceased animals. They are always in harmony with nature, never killing anything that isn't a direct threat, and their population swiftly adjusts to changing circumstances. When creatures die *en masse*, the enokitake swell to huge numbers, and when balance is restored, the mushrooms dwindle again. Their lifecycle is incredibly swift, going from spore to fully germinated mushroom in 24 hours.

Enokitake villages are often well hidden, built to disturb as little of the environment as possible. Here the humble creatures perform silent concerts, "singing" in unison through sign language and reveling in the flood of positive emotions. Outsiders who bring hate, anger, and pain into an enokitake community are treated with suspicion and skepticism, but a sincere plea for help is enough to gain the aid of the entire tribe.

OSTOYAE

A hulking amalgamation of mushroom caps and mycelium, the ostoyae is born of the enokitake and dies in their service. Merged flesh and consciousness make up the towering creature, forming a robust, treelike body with a mushroom canopy. The ostayae grows ever stronger as more enokitake combine with it, recovering from injury and gaining strength with each life that is given. However, a bright candle cannot burn for long—an ostoyae perishes after mere 24 hours of life. The enokitake do not take the creation of this entity lightly, giving their lives in service of the tribe. An ostoyae is a living testament to the power of cooperation and family, rewarding the enokitake's sacrifice with overwhelming power in service of their defense.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an ostoyae with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

OSTOYAE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Ostoyae are formed when three or more enokitake combine into a single towering creature. It is physically dominating, dealing incredible damage with each of its swings. Additional enokitake can sacrifice themselves to further strengthen an ostoyae in the rare instance one proves not up to task of defending the colony.
22	Ostoyae are quick to move, even if they lack rapid reflexes, and can project a line of devastating energy from their gaping mouths. This energy can strike a healthy humanoid dead in an instant, turning it into fungal matter that soon sprouts into more enokitake. The ostoyae can also end spells with a touch, dissolving the magic into earth and mud.
26	The ostoyae only lasts for 24 hours, after which it dies, succumbing to the rapid metabolism that fuels its abilities. Delaying or avoiding it for that time is enough to ensure victory, though the damage it can inflict is substantial. It frequently grabs and throws opponents, tossing them around the battlefield before closing in to pummel them before they have a chance to recover.

The Ostoyae

The ostoyae is a marvel, no doubt. Formed of three enokitake, this mycelium hulk grows to incredible size in a matter of seconds. The accretion of so much mass out of thin air is a perplexing mystery, but the effectiveness of the result is inarguable. More than a simple killing machine, the ostoyae is fiercely intelligent and lightning quick. It can cross long distances in moments, landing devastating blows on anything smaller than it is. Worse, the more enokitake merge to form one, the larger and tougher it becomes. It is fortunate this organic war machine can only maintain itself for a single day, after which it decomposes and collapses. Without that limitation, I've no doubt the enokitake could dominate every forest on the material plane.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Brute

Favors: Dexterity (Targeting), Druids, Range, Rangers, Sorcerers, Warlocks

Foils: Constitution (Targeting), Clerics, Spells (Low Level), Paladins, Wizards

TACTICS

The ostoyae fights directly and brutally, seeking to end conflict as quickly as possible to avoid causing excess emotional harm to the tribe. Lacking the enokitake's empathic abilities, it has no qualms about the horrific injuries it inflicts. A speed of 60 feet allows the ostoyae to engage even agile foes in melee, and its Overpowering Strikes trait gives it advantage against most characters, as well as some additional damage. Don't forget these bonuses—the ostoyae is much less effective without them.

On its turns, it should start with Kabloom, firing a line of powerful energy at as many characters as it can hit. It should then use Smash if it can reach someone or Hurl if it can't. Smash targets creatures that are within 5 feet of each other, allowing for some serious damage if the party sticks too close to each other. Hurl is both an effective means of ranged damage and a way to move characters around the battlefield if the ostoyae grapples them with its Seize legendary action. The last action option, Naturalize, is to help the ostoyae deal with ongoing spells like *wall of fire* that can deal a lot of damage over a prolonged period of time.

In general, alternate between Seize and Strike with the legendary actions, grappling characters and tossing them around or just smashing them when they get too close. Stride is useful if the party is extremely mobile or slows the ostoyae down. Wind Up can make for some fun moments and should be used for thematic reasons to make powerful attacks.

Easier Tactics – Avoid using Hurl, and focus on making melee attacks with Smash. Try not to target characters within 5 feet of other characters so you don't deal additional damage. Primarily use the Stride legendary action rather than the options that deal damage.

Harder Tactics – Use Hurl to position characters next to each other, then come down with Smash. Between its high speed and legendary actions, the ostoyae is highly maneuverable, and you can easily get two to three characters clumped up for a series of good hits. Save Kabloom for later in the fight when the party is wounded, as it can easily kill weakened characters by reducing them to 0 hit points.

PLOT HOOKS

Last Stand. A large tribe of enokitake have long suffered at the hands of nearby humanoids who pollute their forest and expose the creatures to constant negative emotions. In a rage, the entire tribe sacrifices themselves to form five massive ostoyae, each of which moves to assault a different nearby town.

Life Is Short. After successfully defending its tribe, an ostoyae has only 14 hours to live. Cautiously approaching a nearby town, the creature wishes to experience all life has to offer in what little time it has left.

Freak of Nature. By some miraculous occurrence, an ostoyae has lived well past its normal lifespan. Unaccustomed to such an event, its tribe is unsure what to do with the hulking creature. Lacking an enokitake's empathic abilities, the ostoyae is a poor fit for the community and is desperately seeking acceptance in a group able to accommodate its nature (and size)!

TREASURE

When an ostoyae explodes upon death, it leaves behind a cloud of magic spores in the area that last for 2 hours. These spores are powerfully magical, containing the gametes of the enokitake tribe. Any cleric or druid that finishes a short rest within the area become endowed with magical knowledge, permanently adding the following spell to their class spell lists.

New Spell – Kabloom

This spell is a class spell for clerics and druids.

Kabloom

7th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (300 ft. line)
Components: V, S, M (an enokitake spore)
Duration: Instantaneous

You spew forth a line of green energy from your mouth in a line 300 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each flesh-and-blood creature in that line must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 20d6 poison damage, or half as much on a success. The bodies of creatures slain by this damage explode into spores that form an enokitake child in 2d6 hours. Enokitake created by this spell are initially friendly toward you and your allies.

ECOLOGY

Ostoyae don't have much ecology due to their 24-hour lifespans. They are completely devoted to the tribe's needs, and, while the merged consciousness within them grants them augmented intelligence and perception, they seldom rely on their mental faculties, preferring brute force. Areas where an ostoyae falls soon grow into blooming groves, as the soil there is richly fertilized. In conversation, ostoyae are quick witted and cunning, possessing the combined knowledge of every enokitake that formed them. When they're not fighting, the creatures are sorrowful, lamenting the sacrifices of those who created it. Ostoyae typically spend their last few hours of life performing elaborate mourning rituals, and after death the enokitake build stone monuments in its honor.

OSTOYAE

Gargantuan plant, lawful neutral

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 234 (12d20 + 108)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	6 (-2)	28 (+9)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +14, Int +8, Wis +11
Skills Nature +13, Perception +16
Damage Resistances poison, psychic
Condition Immunities stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 26
Languages sign language
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP); for every additional enokitake that merges with the ostoyae beyond the initial three, increase its CR by 1

TRAITS

Death Throes. When the ostoyae dies, it explodes in a wave of concussive force. Each enemy creature within 300 feet of it must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or be knocked unconscious for 1 hour.

Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts. When an enokitake merges with an ostoyae, the ostoyae's current hit points and hit point maximum increase by 78 (4d20 + 36), and its dimensions increase by 5 feet in every direction. An ostoyae can have a maximum of ten enokitake merged with itself at any given time (including the three that formed it). An ostoyae and any enokitake that merged with it die 24 hours after it is formed.

Guardian of the Enokitake. The ostoyae cannot be compelled or forced to act in a manner that would go against the interests of its tribe.

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

Overpowering Strikes. The ostoyae has advantage on attack rolls against creatures smaller than it, and it deals an additional 19 (3d12) damage when it hits such creatures with its attacks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ostoyae makes three attacks, or one attack and one other action.

Hurl. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, range 150/300 ft., one target. *Hit:* 31 (4d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage. Anything the ostoyae throws with this attack takes 31 (4d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage when it collides with a solid object or surface.

Kabloom (Recharge 5–6). The ostoyae projects a 300-foot-long, 5-foot-wide line of green energy from its mouth. Everything in that line must attempt a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, losing 70 (20d6) hit points on a failure, or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points from this effect is transformed into spores that grow into an enokitake child within 2d6 hours.

Naturalize. The ostoyae touches an object, creature, or magical effect within 15 feet. Any spell of 5th level or lower on the target ends. If the spell is 6th level or higher, the ostoyae makes a Wisdom ability check (+6 bonus) against a DC of 10 + the spell's level. On a success, the spell ends.

Smash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (3d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage. Anything within 5 feet of the target is also targeted by this attack.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The ostoyae 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. The ostoyae regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Seize. The ostoyae attempts to grapple a creature within reach or picks up an object within reach.

Stride. The ostoyae moves up to 30 feet.

Strike. The ostoyae makes a single attack.

Wind Up (Costs 2 Actions). The ostoyae takes the Ready action to ready an attack against the first target that moves within its reach. On a successful hit, the readied attack deals an additional 35 (10d6) damage.

Fell-beyonders

From the darkest reaches of the space between the realm of dreams and the infinite void, there exists a race of beings that seek only to break the hearts of the living—the fell-beyonders, whose craving for pain and malice is beyond measure. Fell-beyonders have existed since time immemorial, feeding on those who hold love and passion in their hearts. Some say the first gods gathered them from the void to shape the deep places of the earth so that terror would always lurk below the realms of mortals. Others prophesy that the fell-beyonders are meant to scatter the stars across the sky, filling the world above with a vast, all-consuming emptiness. The only thing that can be agreed upon is the fell-beyonders exist to remind mortals that between every moment of hope, happiness, or love is a vile shadow that threatens to reduce all there is to ash.

In truth, these nightmarish creatures are beings from the unearthly twilight, a dark realm abandoned by gods since the end of the last age. Forsaken and abandoned, these creatures festered for millennia in a world devoid of all but the vilest emotions. Having discovered a pathway to the mortal realms through dreams, the fell-beyonders are now unleashed to feed upon the hopes and passions of all waking life.

FELL-MURDONA

The discordant, umbral whispers of the twisted fell-murdona inspire madness of unparalleled depravity. Those afflicted commit crimes against the order of all things, shattering peace and prosperity and leading the world to chaos. Stories are told of powerful beings who direct the fell-murdona through the concourse of dreams and into the very hearts of kings, turning their minds to volatile dust blown about by the winds of impending change. Appearing as a dark, humanoid-shaped cloud, the fell-murdona's form contains a pair of red eyes shining as bright as stars, burning with malice.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Misery takes many forms, but I had never imagined it could walk the world as a being of utter torment. It is said these fell-beyonders are born from our nightmares, our darkest fears set loose upon the world. While this is merely a theory, I cannot deny that the foul presence and fearsome abilities of these creatures are eerily reminiscent of my darkest dreams. My research suggests the creatures hail from an abandoned world, wisely forgotten given the properties of its inhabitants. Additionally, once manifested these aberrations are but flesh and blood. I have witnessed firsthand three varieties thus far and have received firsthand accounts of a more lethal, elusive fourth. I am considering an expedition to shine a light on the nature of these mysterious beings, but how does one travel through one's own dreams?

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a fell-murdona with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

FELL-MURDONA LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	The fell-murdona influences weak minds to evil, using powerful psionic powers and cunning deception to spread misery and madness.
21	Every fell-murdona has a secret hiding place from which it operates, a pocket dimension between the planes from which it only ventures forth under cover of darkness on destructive errands that bring nothing but evil.
26	The fell-murdona feeds upon the harm and misery spread by its pawns. The more creatures under the fell-murdona's influence, the greater its power. Curing those afflicted by the aberration is the surest path to victory against it.

TACTICS

A fell-murdona is best treated as a phantom assassin and manipulator hiding in the shadows and puppeteering the world's rulers. However, they do engage in combat with those who expose their conspiracies, commanding powerful minions while evading capture. A murdona is a cunning foe and will almost always make attempts to infect the party with its madness long before a face-to-face encounter. The more party members it infects, the greater its advantages when initiative is rolled. The murdona makes use of powerful disabling abilities, such as *sleep* and *dominate monster*, which it knows to use against the most vulnerable targets as soon as possible.

Because fell-murdonas need to influence other creatures to be effective, they always dispel magic that would protect against their beguiling power whenever possible. Creatures it cannot influence are primary threats for the fell-murdona, which will use every means at its disposal to neutralize the danger. The murdona is rarely randomly encountered. Its lairs are always hidden spaces in busy, public areas where it can be surrounded by pliable minds that can be used as innocent shields or willing minions.

Easier Tactics – The fell-murdona has few minions at its disposal and has made no efforts to infect the party with its Whispers of Madness feature prior to the encounter. The fell-murdona will hold back on its more powerful spells, such as *mass suggestion*, in favor of direct attacks and single-target effects.



Harder Tactics – The fell-murdona should have infected at least one party member before engaging in combat, otherwise it flees any combat until it has enough advantages. The fell-murdona should have a small army of lesser creatures influenced by its power, ready to attack the party with fanatical mania. The fell-murdona should only resort to melee attacks if victory is assured or if it has no other options, preferring slaves and puppets to corpses.

PLOT HOOKS

The King Is Dead. The ruler of nations has been found slain, and an investigation is underway. The entirety of his court has been arrested while the phantom menace lurks in the shadows, a voice in the dark, beckoning all the king's men to commit acts of treason and murder.

Legend of the Fell-murdona: Inception of Evil

A phantom threat lurked within the royal bed chamber. The king, in a fever dream, tossed and turned, tormented by the haunting voice issuing from the depths of his own mind. "Slay him. Slay thine own son. Slay him that thy crown might rule forever." The king awoke, a dagger in his trembling hand.

"Slay the usurper, the unfit heir to your holy throne."

Strong drink and sleepless nights became the only resistance to the voice that poisoned his mind.

"Thou art king and thy will is law. Slay him to secure thy future."

For ten years the whispers tore the king's mind until he was found, bloody blade in hand, his son dead, his line ended.

Within a month of her husband's death, the queen awoke, a dark whisper echoing from her dreams. "Slay the murderer. Slay the hand that killed thine own son. Seek vengeance for this crime committed by the false king."

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Charmed (Protection from), Clerics, Paladins, Wisdom (High), Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Charisma (Low), Fighters, Rogues, Spellcasters (Lack of)

A Family Affair. The home of a character's lover has been burned down; there were no survivors. There were also no signs of an accident, funeral services, or forced entry. The lover was not found among the deceased. In the bedroom, however, was a dark mural depicting nightmarish creatures and a forbidden script bearing a simple word: TAKEN.

The Cusp of War. The great nations have met and a truce is on the horizon; however, the armies' generals seem uneasy, unrested, and particularly stressed. They speak in strange tongues and seem to be drawing battle plans that would wake the fires of war. They speak of visions, the "great ones," and the glory of ages past with the fires of hell being the only purifying force to bring about a new age of honor.

TREASURE

The eyes of a fell-murdona can be distilled into the principal component of a dream-altering substance. When added to an alcoholic beverage, the liquid becomes tainted with the stuff of nightmares. Whenever a creature drinks such a liquid, it must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become forever cursed to have only nightmares when it would dream. While not harmful, the effects of this curse are nonetheless disturbing, and the liquid is highly prized as a tool of vengeance against one's enemies.

ECOLOGY

Fell-murdonas live in nightmare cysts, dark dwellings of shadow that form where the unearthly twilight and the material plane intersect.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE FELL-BEYONDERS

Fell-tongue is the language of nightmares. When spoken it sounds like bloody water spilling over rocks, the woods catching fire at night, or a dying man's lungs breathing their final breath. Strange and subtle details are hidden within this nuanced language, and it cannot be learned unless one's soul has been pledged to these living nightmares. The wise never willingly hear or read Fell-tongue, for the fell-beyonders are mysteriously drawn to the use of their words.

Fell-tongue is both written and spoken. The letterforms resemble scars that never heal, stains that cannot be removed, and unnatural breaks in the deep places of the earth. The grammatical structure seems nonsensical, almost as if the speakers are performing a play out of sequence or transmitting a code. The latter is most certainly true, and the secret cipher-speak of Fell-tongue remains an unsolvable riddle to most. Unless taught Fell-tongue directly by a fell-beyonder, a creature cannot speak or read Fell-tongue unless they have a Wisdom of 16 or greater, even if magic is used to enhance one's ability to read, understand, or speak languages.

Over time, the dark dreaming of the fell-murdona creates a pocket large enough for it to nest. This is often in a treasure vault, the attic of a war room, or the seclusium of a court wizard, and it always forms where a position of authority and power can be encountered. One can always spot a fell-murdona's nightmare cyst by examining the impacts and symptoms of the surrounding area. Glass cracks, water spins in reverse, mirrors stop casting reflections, clocks spin backwards; these signs divulge the proximity of the nightmare beast's lair.

FELL-TORMENTÃO

The Bull from Beyond the Abyss. Breaker of Souls. Heroes' Bane. Legend tells of a creature of chaos wreathed in an entanglement of shadow, light, ice, and fire. Standing on four giant-sized, leg-like appendages, this fell-beyonder is said to shatter cities with its mighty tread. Known as the fell-tormentão, this juggernaut of hate and malice seeks to break the strongholds, bastions, and safe havens of the free peoples. They exist to demolish hearth and home. They appear on the horizon, charge down all before them, and leave nothing but rubble in their wake.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a fell-tormentão with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

FELL-TORMENTÃO LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	You can always see a fell-tormentão coming from a mile away. It seeks to destroy objects and structures, preferring ones of great beauty and cultural significance to a community.
21	The aura of a fell-tormentão can inspire hopelessness in others, preventing them from acting against the creature while it tears their homes asunder. When threatened, the fell-tormentão can unleash a cloud of petrifying dust, transforming its assailants to stone.
26	A fell-tormentão is not intelligent and can be easily tricked into a trap with the right bait (preferably with an illusion of a magnificent structure). When engaging a tormentão directly, it is best to spread out to avoid its trampling hooves. While difficult to achieve, limiting the beast's movement removes much of its offensive capabilities, with the added bonus of preventing too much collateral damage.

FELL-MURDONA

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 199 (21d10 + 84)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +7, Cha +13
Skills Deception +13, Insight +7, Persuasion +13, Stealth +11
Damage Resistances psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Fell-tongue, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

TRAITS

Ecstasy of Agony. When a creature under the effects of a spell produced by the fell-murdona deals damage to a creature other than the fell-murdona, the fell-murdona regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt (rounded down, minimum of 1).

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The fell-murdona's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

At will: *dispel magic*, *sending*, *suggestion*, *telekinesis*
3/day: *dimension door*, *mass suggestion*, *pass without trace*, *sleep* (9th Level)
1/day: *dominate monster*, *dream*, *plane shift* (self only)

Manipulative Mind. The fell-murdona has advantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration and can concentrate simultaneously on up to two effects at a time.

Whispers of Madness. When the fell-murdona affects or speaks to a creature with a spell it has cast, it can immediately take a bonus action to force that creature to succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or have its mind become infected with madness. The fell-murdona can communicate telepathically with the creature across any distance as long as it is on the same plane of existence as the fell-murdona. At the end of each month, the creature can repeat this saving throw, ending the madness on a success.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fell-murdona makes three attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) psychic damage.

Power Word Insanity (Recharge 5–6). The fell-murdona speaks a single word of pure madness. Each creature that can hear the fell-murdona within 120 feet cannot be immune to the charmed condition and has disadvantage on Wisdom saving throws for 1 minute. A creature can end this effect early by choosing to willingly act according to the fell-murdona's desires for an entire turn.

REACTIONS

Dream-Step. When the fell-murdona takes damage from a creature, it can take a reaction to magically teleport itself to an unoccupied space adjacent to a creature affected by a spell cast by it, as long as that creature is on the same plane of existence.

Legend of the Fell-tormentão: Breaker of Souls

The mammoth titan from hell slammed into the stone barricade, obliterating in a single strike a wall that had withstood the breath of dragons.

The small legion trembled in fear at the sight of the mammoth terror from beyond. Their leader steeled himself and led a charge against the fell-tormentão, fearing neither death nor defeat.

To this day, the legion still stands, their petrified bodies forever serving as a monument to unshakable courage, timeless stone corpses unaware of the petrifying cloud that such a titan of the unearthly twilight could unleash upon them.

It is said that these statues will stand for all time, the hearts of the widows shall be broken forever, and the lamentations of the children shall be heard for a thousand years.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Druids, Flight, Monks, Range, Sorcerers

Foils: Charisma (Low), Clerics, Fighters, Mobility (Low), Rangers

TACTICS

A fell-tormentão is a juggernaut of destruction designed to bring down large structures and blast through armies. Because of its size, the tormentão can move through smaller creatures with impunity, using its Stomp attack as it goes to crush those underfoot. While the fell-tormentão has a passion for destroying structures, it is intelligent enough to know that slaying hostile creatures will make its mission of destruction all the easier. Using its incredible speed, the fell-tormentão can move about the battlefield, ramming headfirst into creatures with terrifying force. The creature knows to subject as many creatures to its Aura of Hopelessness as possible, preferring not to injure afflicted creatures in favor of destroying buildings.

Obstinate or dangerous foes are charged down immediately, with only flying creatures safe from the fell-tormentão's rampage. Magic-users will find many of their spells foiled by the beast's legendary resistance, with their most powerful effects negated completely by the fell-tormentão's Antimagic Sheath. Once the fell-tormentão has demolished every building in sight, it will often flee to recover its injuries, leaving enough survivors to lament the destruction of their precious homes.

Easier Tactics – The fell-tormentão won't use its Stone Cloud feature optimally, at best affecting one major enemy. It may also spend entire turns destroying structures, completely ignoring those who assail it. It will also strike those afflicted with its Aura of Hopelessness, freeing them from its effects. Finally, the fell-tormentão won't move into another creature's space unless it has no other way of maneuvering, and it should never Stomp more than a single creature.

Harder Tactics – The fell-tormentão should charge the character most likely to resist its Aura of Hopelessness, letting others experience its aura until it is ready to deal with them. If its enemies cluster together, the fell-tormentão will move into their space and continue to use Stomp until they are paste or they spread out (whichever comes first). If the tormentão manages to petrify a creature, it will use a legendary action as soon as possible to smash it into pieces.

PLOT HOOKS

The End of All Things. In the wake of a massive siege where a nation emerges victorious, a large mass appears on the horizon: an ominous silhouette casting a shadow of fire and ice upon the brave dead that sacrificed their lives that day. This new devilry threatens to turn a righteous victory into a crushing defeat unless the characters intervene.

The Sorcerer's Gambit. The king's trusted—albeit cracked—advisor has suggested that in order to maintain his position of influence in the geopolitical landscape, he must obtain a weapon of war. The party is charged with wrangling a known fell-tormentão the local nomadic tribes follow on an annual cycle.

Nightmare Slayers. A fell-tormentão has been preemptively spotted trekking *en route* to the nation's farming districts. Losing the livestock would be devastating to the nation, so the characters must find a way to redirect and distract the aberration. An abandoned city is several leagues away and would make an ideal location for the beast to conduct its rampage.

TREASURE

The horns of a fell-tormentão can be ground into a fine powder that can be used as a material component that empowers spells to be more destructive toward objects and structures. When a spell would deal damage to an object or structure and uses fell-tormentão horn powder as a material component, it doubles that damage, and the horn powder is consumed in the casting. A typical set of fell-tormentão horns provides enough powder for ten uses.

ECOLOGY

The fell-tormentão is found in a nightmare rupture, a dark gash in the material plane through which the beast can escape its home world. These ruptures usually appear as rifts in the deep sea, deserts, or mountains. The fell-tormentão only emerges when it receives a signal, a subsonic horn heralding chaos whose source has never been uncovered. Once it has begun a rampage, a fell-tormentão will level everything it can find over a two week period. If by the end of that time the fell-tormentão is not slain, the creature will return to its home and rest for months at a time. Because of the elusive nature of the nightmare ruptures where fell-tormentãos lair, it is usually far safer to wait until they emerge. Bounties on a known fell-tormentão in the area compensate well for the excessive collateral damage they inflict.

FELL-ORDALIUS

A mineshaft full of withered corpses, their faces contorted in abject terror. A vile cult torn apart by ferocious infighting and violent paranoia. These scenes and similar events of mass hysteria are the hallmark of the fell-ordalius, an unseen force that drives souls into a self-destructive downward spiral of fear and desperation. An invisible threat of a diabolical nature, the fell-ordalius is the voice of doubt in the back of one's mind, the gnawing fear that eats at the heart of every creature with hopes and dreams. A formless being of smoke and fear, the fell-ordalius's presence is felt long before it is perceived as it stalks its victims. It never makes a sound, a silent witness to the madness inspired by its presence.

FELL-TORMENTÃO

Gargantuan aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 292 (15d20 + 135)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	11 (+0)	28 (+9)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)

Skills Perception +9
Saving Throws Str +14, Wis +9, Cha +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, unconscious
Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Fell-tongue
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

TRAITS

Aura of Hopelessness. At the start of each of the fell-tormentão's turns, each creature within 120 feet of it must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma saving throw or be unable to experience any emotion other than hopelessness for 10 minutes. An affected creature cannot act in a manner that would harm or impede the fell-tormentão (seeing such efforts as futile) and cannot take reactions. At the end of each affected creature's turn, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the fell-tormentão damages the creature in the meantime, the effect ends. Once a creature has succeeded on a saving throw against this feature or the effect ends for it, it is immune to this effects for 24 hours.

Charge. If the fell-tormentão moves at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a Gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 45 (10d8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Demolisher. On each of its turns, the fell-tormentão can spend 20 feet of movement (no action required) to deal 40 points of bludgeoning damage to an object not being worn or carried, or a structure within 5 feet of it.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If a fell-tormentão fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Rampage. The tormentão takes the Dash action and makes a single attack, or makes three attacks.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 45 (8d8 + 9) piercing damage.

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 0 ft., each target beneath the fell-tormentão. *Hit:* 25 (3d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage.

Stone Cloud (Recharge 6). The fell-tormentão releases a cloud of petrifying dust in a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on it, which lasts until the start of its next turn. When a creature or objects not being worn or carried enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be turned to stone and petrified. On a successful saving throw, a creature is instead restrained for 1 minute.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The fell-tormentão can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. The fell-tormentão regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Antimagic Sheath (Costs 3 Actions). Until the end of its next turn, the fell-tormentão is immune to spells and magical effects of 7th level or lower.

Dash. The fell-tormentão takes the Dash action.

Gore. The fell-tormentão makes a Gore attack.

Stomp. The fell-tormentão makes a Stomp attack.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a fell-ordalius with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

FELL-ORDALIUS LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Fell-ordaliuses are naturally invisible. For those unfortunate few able to perceive it, the creature appears as a shadowy blanket, often hiding near its paranoid victims to bear witness to their suffering.
22	If you come across untouched bodies with looks of terror upon their faces and there is an aroma of what can only be described as seaweed and mustard, a fell-ordalius was in the area recently. The creatures inspire overwhelming fear, which can terrify even the most courageous to death.
27	While many terrifying creatures require great willpower to resist, the ordalius's fear is biologically based. Its hallucinogenic vapors reave the mind with terrifying visions so extreme it can kill any being who endures it for too long. Only those with formidable constitution can handle these vapors safely.

Legend of the Fell-ordalius: Trial of Living

The Order of the Wanderers of Twilight feared the gods with a feverish passion. Driven by their desire for salvation, their sacrifices of the flesh grew more elaborate by the year, inspired by the threat of divine wrath.

One by one, the members of this dark and secret society fell to their mutilations, their bodies maimed past the point of all reason. Those few who remained were sealed up their abbey, terrified to leave lest they risk the wrath of the gods. They were never seen again, but the echoes of their final screams will never be forgotten.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker
Favors: Bards, Clerics, Fear (Protection from), Perception (High), Wizards
Foils: Barbarians, Constitution (Low), Fighters, Melee, Monks

TACTICS

A fell-ordalius is a master of subterfuge, only fighting when it believes its victims are unaware. Approaching invisibly, the fell-ordalius instills doubt as it stalks its prey, waiting until they are vulnerable before unleashing its Living Nightmare gas. Once frightened, creatures are easily dispatched or turned against their allies through the use of the fell-ordalius's Violent Paranoia action. The aberration will jump (metaphorically speaking) at the chance to ambush an isolated creature and will patiently wait for the perfect opportunity to do so.

If spotted, the fell-ordalius will focus on staying out of reach while keeping as many creatures frightened as possible. If too many enemies prove resistant to its hallucinogenic effects, the fell-ordalius will flee and return for another pass when it's least expected. When badly damaged, a fell-ordalius can easily retreat through small spaces, taking the Hide action at every opportunity until its pursuers give up.

Easier Tactics – The fell-ordalius will make no effort to hide itself; it's invisible, but it's easily located. Additionally, it will not optimize the use of its Living Nightmare feature, only afflicting a few creatures at a time. Finally, the fell-ordalius will not retreat until it is gravely injured, making it easier to kill when it inevitably tries to escape.

Harder Tactics – The fell-ordalius should be well hidden long before it makes contact with the characters. It should wait until the characters are preoccupied with other threats, using Instill Doubt to harry them along the way. At the worst possible moment, the fell-ordalius can unleash Living Nightmare, focusing on the most injured character with Violent Paranoia to add to the confusion.

PLOT HOOKS

Archmage Lost. The apprentice to the wizened archmage of the court has returned from the collection of rare spell components only to find her master a frail corpse in the midst of intense study. The mage was in good health and mental wellness when she had left for the journey two months prior, so what was the cause?

Three Have Fallen. Three noble families have converted to a new faith found at a mysterious shrine in the wilds. None have returned from their pilgrimage, and investigators have said there are rumors that this new spiritual obsession has been burning bridges at the highest level. Conspiracy is feared as the increasingly paranoid noble families sacrifice more and more cult members to the mysterious force lurking in the woods.

A Royal Secret. The royal house recently changed their method of execution from beheading to a more "humane" process. Performed in secret in the castle dungeons, the slain emerge seemingly unharmed, save for a look of abject terror upon their faces. While disturbing, few question the nature of this new protocol. After all, what could be worse than beheading?

TREASURE

The fell-ordalius keeps no treasure, but the essence of its hallucinogenic vapors can be extracted for use as a deadly poison. Doing so requires a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Alchemist's Supplies) ability check immediately after the ordalius is slain, or the vapors become too diluted and disperse. A successful check creates enough poison for five doses.

Fell-Ordalius Fumes (Inhaled). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, a creature frightened by this poison must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw. Once it has succeeded on three saving throws in this manner, the effect ends. If the creature is frightened for the poison's entire duration, it dies of fright.

ECOLOGY

A fell-ordalius has no fear of light, but prefers locations where it can afflict small numbers of creatures at a time. The aberration knows that if it attracts too much attention, its habits will be dramatically impeded by investigators poking around and exposing its attack patterns. When given the choice, a fell-ordalius will always live near humanoids, waiting for the precise moment to strike and leaving little evidence of its passing. These creatures operate openly, as few beings can see through their natural invisibility. They prefer areas where they are least expected, and more than one has been found in holy shrines and other places whose residents would not hesitate to obliterate an evil intruder. While they rarely communicate, a fell-ordalius is capable of speech. Fell-ordaliuses can be expected to know much of their surrounding environment, and they make excellent spies when their favor can be bought.

FELL-AHNG'EL

Guilt eaters, deathrattlers, and worldbenders are all names that describe the fearsome entities known as the fell-ahng'els. These creatures are the manifestations of an unknown god dying an eternal death within the realms of the unearthly twilight. As this god's mind rots and decays, the death throes of its vast intelligence manifest in reality as the fell-ahng'els. These creatures are beings of limited existence with short life spans for which the mortal realms should be immensely thankful. However, there are legends of one who has always walked, the Ahng'el Prime, the first thought of the unknown god. Ahng'els sculpt reality into an unsolvable labyrinthian maze, locking creatures within a prison of their own shame. Many an adventurer has found themselves lost upon a path forged by a fell-ahng'el, creating a disturbing and twisted echo of divine creation once performed by its progenitor.

FELL-ORDALIUS

Small aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 162 (25d6 + 75)
Speed fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	25 (+7)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +12, Int +5, Wis +13
Skills Insight +13, Perception +13, Stealth +12
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Fell-tongue
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Invisibility. The fell-ordalius is invisible.

Living Nightmare. As a bonus action, the fell-ordalius can emit a cloud of hallucinogenic fumes in a 60-foot-radius sphere centered on it. The sphere moves with the fell-ordalius and last until the fell-ordalius ends the effect as a bonus action.

When a creature enters the area for the first time on its turn or starts its turn there, it must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or begin to hallucinate for as long as it remains within the area. While hallucinating, the creature is frightened of everything it can perceive (including sounds, sensations, and objects). This lasts until the effect ends for the creature or it ends its turn outside the effect's area. A creature that spends 1 continuous minute frightened by this effect immediately dies of fright. Once a creature has succeeded on a saving throw against this effect, it is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Shroud Form. The fell-ordalius can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

ACTIONS

Instill Doubt. The fell-ordalius inflicts a creature it can see within 60 feet with crippling doubt. Until the start of its next turn, when the creature would roll a 6 or higher on an attack roll or ability check, it instead rolls a 5.

Violent Paranoia. The fell-ordalius deals 21 (6d6) psychic damage to each frightened creature within 120 feet of it. If an affected creature is not aware of the fell-ordalius, it must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or attribute the effect to the nearest creature it can perceive.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a fell-ordalius with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check

FELL-AHNG'EL LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	The fell ahng'els never seem to touch the ground or the walls of anywhere they are found. They float through the air with an unearthly grace, difficult to locate and even harder to catch. They are remorseless, evil, and outrageously powerful.
23	Fell-ahng'els transmute the land around them into a sanity-shattering labyrinth. Creatures who become trapped in the maze become cripplingly ashamed of themselves, reduced to gibbering wrecks for the ahng'els to slaughter at its convenience.
28	A fell-ahng'el can locate and assault creatures over tremendous distances, sensing their footsteps and emotions with frightening precision. Only expert trackers can find a fell-ahng'el before the creature slaughters all intruders.

TACTICS

A fell-ahng'el is a difficult opponent to fight. Unless they are extraordinarily stealthy, any adventurers that approach within 1 mile of it will be quickly sensed. Once the ahng'el uses its Empathic Link feature to determine if they intend hostilities toward the ahng'el, it will unleash deadly *mind spike* spells and other magic to harry and weaken the party. The ahng'el always knows its territory well and will take time to set traps with *symbol* and *glyph of warding*, hoping to wear intruders down and force them to rest. While they may recover from the effects of the ahng'el's assaults, creatures that gain crippling shame as a result both feed and protect the ahng'el. An ahng'el will try to apply as many levels of this condition as possible to any creatures in the area, reducing the inhabitants to shattered husks to exploit in defense of the creature. Only then will the ahng'el move in for the kill, using its Execute feature to end a shameful existence.

If a party of heroes proves to be more than a match for the ahng'el's traps and tricks, it will allow them to find its home so that it may use its Dispersion feature. Once dispersed, most adventurers will struggle to escape the ahng'el's domain, let alone find their allies. These creatures are perfect targets for the ahng'el's abilities, and many heroes have found themselves imprisoned behind a *wall of stone* for days, slowly wasting away while they await a rescue that will never come.

Easier Tactics – The ahng'el will never use its Dispersion feature, allowing the group to stay together at all times. Once engaged directly, the ahng'el will only use its *maze* spell once it has been critically injured, and use the *passwall* spell to escape from its attackers. The ahng'el will stay close to the ground, and likely attack the party before they accrue more than a few levels of crippling shame. It will leave few creatures alive in its domain, preventing it from having many chances to save its own life via its Immortal Essence feature.

Legend of the Fell-ahng'el: Echo of Nightmare

Within the dungeons of Beoyuat Ken'Thall my brothers and I stood watch over the gate to hell. We were prepared to banish our fiendish charge to the furnace below, a fitting punishment for its heinous crimes, when we witnessed a sight that haunts me to this day.

The basalt walls came alive, twisting into maddening shapes. The dungeon had become an unknowable maze. Everywhere we walked took us farther from our goal. A malevolent shadow loomed over us as the air grew thinner. It was then we realized an intelligence was behind this, shaping our prison to deny us freedom and glory.

It was then it emerged, unhindered by solid walls or its own labyrinth, claiming my brother Tybalt. I turned and cursed its shadowy form with divine fury and smote it with all the power the gods would grant me.

A futile effort.

Its cold eyes fixed upon cousin Edgar, and he vanished with a cry that still echoes in my nightmares.

I know not what it was, where it came from, or why I was spared, but I am forever haunted by the incident in Beoyaut Ken'Thall. The shame I feel at failing my brothers has turned me from the faith, for I am no longer worthy of anything and deserve to live this nightmares I call a life.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Artillery

Favors: Bards, Clerics, Psychic (Protection from), Rangers, Spells (Divination)

Foils: Barbarians, Mobility (High), Monks, Rogues, Wisdom (Low)

Harder Tactics – The ahng'el won't be found unless it wants to be, hiding in frustratingly inaccessible locations within its regional effects. It will also keep many creatures imprisoned in its domain to serve as a precaution via its Immortal Essence feature. Any party that wishes to kill the ahng'el will likely have to free many of these creatures before they can engage the foul entity. Once attacked, the ahng'el opens with *maze*, followed by its Dispersion feature. The creature will waste no time establishing an Empathic Link with vulnerable targets, reducing them to a critically injured state over and over until that character rests. Once a character has six levels of crippling shame, the ahng'el moves in for the kill, fleeing once it has eliminated the target.

PLOT HOOKS

Erupted Earth. A maze has emerged in and around the trading town of Fairbrook, bursting out of the earth. An investigation ensues with a string of dead merchants found on the road side, victims of gruesome plots and machinations. A loan silhouette is seen hovering above the town at night.

The Halls of the Dwimmer-Forge. The ruins of Dwimmer-Forge have been uncovered! But the excavation crew has sent messages that the halls appear to be haunted. A week has passed, and the crew has gone silent and missing. What fate befell them in those hallowed halls?

The Labyrinth. The party is asleep in the inn when a fell-ahng'el appears unexpectedly and begins claiming the inn as its home. It is warding and sculpting the inn into a non-Euclidean nightmare. When the party awakes, they are now trapped in the heart of a labyrinthian village with a fell-ahng'el upsetting the balance.

TREASURE

The heart of fell-ahng'el can be removed up to 1 minute after it is killed. Doing so requires a successful DC 22 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a failure, the heart is damaged in the process and made unusable. If a flesh-and-blood creature takes a bite from the heart, a two-way portal to the unearthly twilight (the home plane of the fell-beyonders) opens in an unoccupied space within 30 feet. This portal lasts for 24 hours, and the location of the portal on the unearthly twilight is determined by the DM. The heart is fully consumed after used five times in this manner, and this feature does not function while on the unearthly twilight.

ECOLOGY

Fell-ahng'els create dungeons and lairs wherever they go but prefer homes that make the effects of their unusual powers less suspicious. Dark dungeons, ancient forests, or abandoned cities are the preferred locales of a fell-ahng'el, often with only enough inhabitants remaining to feed the aberration's loathsome hunger for shame. Fell-ahng'els know that they are incredibly vulnerable until they can establish their regional effects, so rarely will they venture into populated areas for fear of being spotted in transit. While intelligent, a fell-ahng'el rarely cooperates with other creatures. Those allies it does tolerate serve to bring victims to the ahng'el and secure its domain, taking a hefty pay cut from the material possessions of those slain by the fell-beyonder's power.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The area around a fell-ahng'el is twisted into a labyrinthian maze composed of the structures, objects, and terrain within the area. This effect occurs within 1 mile of the fell-ahng'el when it finishes a long rest and causes the following effects, and the fell-ahng'el is immune to these effects.

- The area is a disorienting maze of twisting corners, dead ends, and endless spirals. Creatures attempting to travel through the area must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom (Survival) ability check or become lost for 1 hour, making no progress and becoming lost. Additionally, creatures flying above the area cannot perceive any clear landmarks, creatures, or other points of significance within the area; everything appears as a maddening mass of twisted shapes and impossible geometry. This effect does not interfere with the functionality of anything (such as buildings or the properties of stone) within the area, but it warps dimensional space and perception that is impossible to rationalize.
- When a creature finishes a rest within the area, it must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, it becomes increasingly ashamed of its behavior, gaining a level of crippling shame (see the sidebar of the same name for details).

If the fell-ahng'el is slain, these effects fade over the course of 8 hours.

New Condition: Crippling Shame

A fell-ahng'el can inflict other creatures with debilitating levels of shame, which is a unique condition measured in six levels. An effect can give a creature one or more levels of crippling shame as specified in the effect's description.

LEVEL	EFFECT
1	Disadvantage on attack rolls
2	Cannot willingly accept help or be targeted by effects from allies
3	Deals half damage
4	Cannot take reactions
5	Falls prone and cannot stand up
6	If the creature believes it is being seen by another creature, it must take the Dash action and move out of sight by the fastest possible route on each of its turns. If there is nowhere to move, the creature becomes incapacitated until it believes it is no longer being seen.

If a creature suffering from crippling shame suffers another effect that causes crippling shame, its current level of crippling shame increases by the amount specified in the effect's description.

A creature suffers the effect of its current level of crippling shame as well as all lower levels. For example, a creature suffering two levels of crippling shame cannot willingly accept help or be targeted by effects from allies and has disadvantage on attack rolls.

Levels of crippling shame cannot be removed while a creature is within an area affected by a fell-ahng'el's regional effects. Twenty-four hours after a creature leaves an area affected by a fell-ahng'el, it loses all levels of crippling shame and the condition ends.

FELL-AHNG'EL

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16
Hit Points 221 (26d8 + 104)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +11, Wis +9
Skills History +17, Perception +21
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, petrified, prone
Senses tremorsense 1 mile (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 31
Languages Fell-tongue, telepathy 1 mile
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Immortal Essence. When the fell-ahng'el is reduced to 0 hit points and there is a creature within range of its telepathy that has one or more levels of crippling shame, it is instead reduced to 1 hit point and a creature of the ahng'el's choice within range of its telepathy loses a level of crippling shame.

Innate Spellcasting. The fell-ahng'el is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 22, +14 to hit on spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells requiring no components, and does not need to concentrate to maintain a spell's effects for the duration:

At will: *arcane lock*, *knock*, *mind spike*† (5th level), *passwall*, *wall of stone*
2/day each: *guards and wards*, *glyph of warding*, *mental prison*†, *symbol*
1/day each: *imprisonment*, *maze*

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). When the fell-ahng'el fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multispell. The ahng'el casts two spells, only one of which can target an enemy creature.

Dispersion (1/Day). Each creature of the ahng'el's choice within 300 feet of it must succeed on a DC 22 Charisma saving throw or be magically teleported to an unoccupied space of the ahng'el's choice within 1 mile of it. No two creatures teleported in this manner may appear within 100 feet of each other.

Empathic Link. The fell-ahng'el establishes an empathic link with a creature within range of its telepathy. Until the empathic link ends, the ahng'el feels all the emotions the target feels, the target is always considered within range of the ahng'el's spells, and the target has disadvantage on saving throws against the ahng'el.

The target can use an action on its turn to attempt to break the link by succeeding on a DC 22 Wisdom (Insight) ability check.

The ahng'el can only have a single empathic link established at a time, and the effect ends immediately if an affected target leaves the range of the ahng'el's telepathy.

Execute. *Melee Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, one creature with six levels of crippling shame, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* the target dies.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The fell-ahng'el 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. The ahng'el regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Empathic Link (Costs 2 Actions). The fell-ahng'el uses its Empathic Link.

Mind Spike. The fell-ahng'el casts *mind spike*.

Passwall. The fell-ahng'el casts *passwall* and moves up to its speed.

† This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*.

Greater Liches

The lich is a vile creature. Its form is a twisted mockery a life, with a spirit sustained by a steady diet of souls to prolong an unnatural existence. While liches are always great spellcasters, magic is not a force that is fully understood. Occasionally, a lich will experience a magical flux in their existence that forces upon them a terrible transformation. Those unfortunate enough to survive this process are forever changed, their powers evolving into a new fearsome array of abilities that dramatically outclasses their "normal" counterparts. These "Greater Liches" are blights upon existence; an abomination to both life and magic. Unfortunately, this makes the already tenacious lich even more difficult to kill, with greater liches being some of the most resilient beings in the known realms.

PARAMOUR LICH

True love is a beautiful thing. It is also completely incompatible with the nature of a lich, whose evil existence rebels against an emotion of such purity and goodness. Should a lich come to love a powerful spellcaster with naked and humble sincerity and be loved in turn, the foul magic that maintains their existence cannot abide. At the moment of their first embrace, both lovers are merged in a foul necromantic display. Body, mind, and soul are stitched together, eternally cursed in a twisted perversion of true love – A paramour lich. Now possessed of a selfish love, the lich fights with overwhelming magic to protect what little fragment is left of its affections.

The Paramore Lich

I feel nothing but pity for the unfortunate souls who fall in love with a lich. While they may be bound to their lovers for all time, I cannot believe this was a desired outcome for either party. These liches are oddly dysfunctional, speaking over each other and bickering at every opportunity. I theorize that this pseudo-insanity is some kind of curse, a magical contract that binds two souls together, intimate but incapable of true love. I asked Johan his opinion on such matters and whether or not such a pact could be severed. Even with his expertise as a warlock and access to my considerable library, he could devise no such method. Although he may have just been using the situation as an excuse to peruse my literature.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Artillery

Favors: Bards, Clerics, Paladins, Spells (Protection from), Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Rangers, Rogues, Spellcasters (Lack of), Spells (Low Level), Warlocks

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a paramour lich with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

PARAMORE LICH LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Two beings in one body, a paramour lich can unleash magic that would humble an ordinary lich, and it can even augment its spells with twisted metamagic. Few spellcasters can compare to its abilities.
21	These liches can sling huge numbers of spells and are even able to concentrate on multiple effects at once. With two brains comes an impressive pool of knowledge, which the lich uses to assault the minds of enemies with impunity.
27	These liches use enchantment, necromancy, and illusion magic almost exclusively, so prepare accordingly. While their metamagic is potent, it can only be used infrequently, so countering or dispelling will prove most helpful in combat.

TACTICS

Unless caught completely unprepared or supremely overconfident, the lich should always have its *sequester* cast upon its phylactery. The lich should also always have *mind blank* cast upon itself at the start of each day and quickly begins combat by concentrating on two spells. One of these spells ought to be *invulnerability*, while the other is typically an offensive spell such as *hold person* or *maddening darkness*. Remember that the lich can cast its spells at considerably higher levels for improved effects and has more than enough spell slots to do so without concerns about running low on resources.

The lich reserves its Antimagic Sheath feature for an enemy spellcaster who manages to outwit and disable it. The Profane Metamagic feature should always be used in conjunction with the most powerful spell the lich intends to cast that round (when applicable), adding even more power to an already powerful effect. With two turns, the lich can set up a gruesome scenario on its first turn and take full advantage of it on the second. A creature paralyzed by *hold person* is a prime target for area effects that it will be unable to escape. The lich has a large spell list, so consider which combos you wish to employ against the party before you run the encounter.

Easier Tactics – The lich will focus more on casting spells that don't do damage, such as *bestow curse*, *darkness*, *suggestion*, and other effects.



The goal of the lich is to subject the party to as much torment and misery as itself, effectively torturing them to death rather than seeking their immediate annihilation. The lich will not be in its lair and will be unable to make use of its lair actions.

Harder Tactics – The lich should expect a brutal fight and roll initiative with several spells already in effect. It will then use its first turn to unleash a powerful spell such as *psychic scream* or *forcecage* and use subsequent turns casting *blight* and *toll the dead* to lay down heavy damage. It uses its Consume Magic lair action at every opportunity to recover hit points, knowing it has far more spell slots than it needs to get the job done.

PLOT HOOKS

Memento. A paramour lich is roaming the land in search of a lost memento of the beautiful courtship it once experienced. The relationship was so long ago the lich cannot remember where exactly it last saw the item, but fifty years ago a red dragon looted a nearby city where the lich used to live, so that is probably the best place to start.

Matchmaker. Tired of its cursed existence, a paramour lich begins researching true love in hopes of discovering a way to free its entwined souls. Kidnapping people from across the realms, the lich has placed them under observation in a massive underground laboratory, trying to inspire them into loving one another. With no intention of freeing its victims anytime soon, the lich must be defeated before it decides to take its experiments in a more gruesome direction.

Forgiveness. A husband whose wife had her heart stolen by a lich is looking to hire some adventurers. Still in love with his wife, the man wants to put her soul to rest by slaying the paramour lich. This is easier said than done, for the undead monstrosity that now entraps her essence is in possession of a powerful artifact that can destroy souls.

TREASURE

When a lich transforms into a paramour, it gains a new phylactery that is a memento of its love. However, the old phylactery is still a powerful magical object that can be used or sold for a great price if recovered. This phylactery no longer serves its original purpose, becoming useless for the lich that created it.

Abandoned Phylactery

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

If you die while attuned to the phylactery, your mind and soul are released from your body and stored within the item. Over the course of 1d4 days, your body magically reforms within 5 feet of the phylactery. If the phylactery is destroyed while you are reforming, you and your soul are destroyed, beyond the help of all but the gods. Once you have been restored to life in this manner, the phylactery is destroyed.

ECOLOGY

While most liches are solitary beings, paramours are particularly misanthropic. Their existence is fundamentally in opposition to itself, each mind contained within struggling for dominance at every opportunity. One aspect of their personality may be personable and even benevolent to its minions, while the other is wrathful and cruel. Most paramours are perfectly content to converse with themselves for decades, engaging with the world only when they require souls. Paramours are drawn to areas significant to their former relationship, often reducing such areas to a lifeless realm of shadow and pain. Few creatures willingly serve a paramour lich, and fewer still survive long enough for any meaningful relationship to form between master and minion.

PARAMOUR LICH

Large undead, any evil alignment

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 264 (23d10 + 138)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)	28 (+9)

Saving Throws Con +13, Int +12, Wis +11, Cha +16
Skills Arcana +12, History +12, Insight +11, Perception +11, Persuasion +16
Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic, psychic
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common plus up to ten other languages
Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

TRAITS

Eternal Lovers. The paramour is two creatures bound together in body, mind, and soul. The paramour takes two turns on each round of combat and takes its second turn at its initiative count minus 10 (minimum of 1). Additionally, the paramour has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws and ability checks, and can concentrate on up to two effects at once.

Profane Metamagic (1/Round). When the paramour casts a spell, it can choose to improve the effects of the spell (when applicable), by choosing one of the options below.

- **Distant Spell.** The range of the spell is doubled.
- **Expand Spell.** The affected area of the spell is doubled.
- **Heighten Spell.** Affected creatures attempt their first saving throw against the spell with disadvantage.
- **Intensify Spell.** The spell is cast as though it were cast using a spell slot four levels higher, to a maximum of 9th level.
- **Maximize Spell.** The spell deals maximum damage.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed paramour gains a new body in 1d4 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

Spellcasting. The paramour is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 24, +16 to hit with spell attacks). The paramour has the following spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, mage hand, message, toll the dead*†
1st level (6 slots): *charm person, magic missile, shield, unseen servant, witch bolt*
2nd level (5 slots): *darkness, hold person, mind spike*†, *suggestion*
3rd level (5 slots): *animate dead, bestow curse, counterspell, dispel magic*
4th level (4 slots): *black tentacles, blight, charm monster*†, *dimension door*
5th level (4 slots): *cloudkill, enervation*†, *far step*†, *negative energy flood*†
6th level (3 slots): *circle of death, create undead, soul cage*†
7th level (3 slots): *forcecage, sequester, teleport*
8th level (2 slots): *maddening darkness*†, *mind blank*
9th level (2 slots): *invulnerability*†, *psychic scream*†

ACTIONS

Antimagic Sheath (Recharge 5–6). The paramour becomes immune to spells and magical effects for 1 minute and suppresses any magical effects with which it is in contact, but it cannot cast spells while the sheath is in effect. At the start of each of its turns, the paramour can choose to end this effect.

Multispell. The paramour casts two cantrips, or a spell of 5th level or lower and one cantrip.

† This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the lich can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the lich can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- **Ties That Bind.** The lich binds two creatures it can see within 60 feet of each other together with an empathic link. When one of the creatures is affected by an attack or hostile effect that does not affect the other, the linked creature is then also affected. This effect ends if the creatures are ever more than 60 feet apart.
- **Life Suppression.** The lich fills a 30-foot cube with life-suppressing magic for 1 minute. Creatures in the area of the effect cannot regain hit points.
- **Consume Magic.** The lich expends a spell slot and regains 5 (1d10) hit points plus an additional 5 (1d10) per level of the spell slot expended.

TALIEN'S NOTES

All liches respect knowledge; it's how they got to be where they are, after all. I find that this makes them some of the most approachable and personable undead I have encountered, though I would never be such a fool as to trust one. I have learned much from the tongues of liches. Most of which I dare not repeat here. When it came to researching the mythical greater liches however, I found the normally prodigious intellect of these creatures lacking. Each lich spoke in a mixture of terror and awe, reminding me of a schoolchild that first learned of magic. Their naked ambition to attain such an existence was all too clear, but to my surprise none seemed to have a clear understanding of how to attain such a state, or even where to start. If you are a lich and you are reading this, know that I have deliberately omitted key details about my findings to prevent you from expanding your powers and further menacing the world. It's nothing personal.

DEMIDRACOLICH

With their long lives and affinity for treasure, the oldest of dragons amass fortunes to rival the wealth of nations. When a dragon makes the unfortunate choice to become a dracolich, it gains the potential to live forever, and in the process amasses more wealth that would make even the most ancient of dragons envious. While this may seem like a dragon's dream come true, it is a trap. Succumbing to their greed, ancient dracoliches become infatuated with their vast hoards, seeing less and less reason to do anything other than bask in their wealth. Over the centuries their undead bodies slowly deteriorate, transforming them into a deadly undead monstrosity of terrific power: a demidracolich.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a demidracolich with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

DEMIDRACOLICH LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Part demilich, part dragon, all bad. These creatures are well protected deep within their lairs and can seemingly detect any intruder with little difficulty. Most never even get to see the demidracolich before succumbing to its psychic attacks.
22	A demidracolich can detect treasure at a considerable range, becoming aware of any would-be looters who carry valuable equipment. From there, it can destroy their minds while remaining safely hidden. The fabric of life is especially fragile around these creatures, who can extract and consume a soul before one's friends have a chance to react.
28	To avoid detection while assaulting a demidracolich's lair, don't bring treasure or magical equipment. It's risky, but you just may catch the creature by surprise. A demidracolich's phylactery has merged with its hoard, a portion of which must be destroyed to permanently slay the creature.

TACTICS

Demidracoliches are reclusive and paranoid, spending most of their existence silently languishing upon heaps of treasure. Unless roused by creatures in its immediate vicinity, the demidracolich remains motionless,

BEHIND THE CURTAIN – LICHES AND CHALLENGE RATING

A lich's signature feature is the ability to return to life after being slain, so long as its phylactery is intact. This cycle of rejuvenation can prove very troublesome for adventurers, who may have repeated encounters with the same lich until they can hunt down the object and destroy it. While this makes a lich a frustrating enemy, it does not make single encounters with the lich any more difficult. When using liches to challenge your players, we recommend that you not award them experience for defeating it unless its phylactery is destroyed. This prevents the lich from being an "XP farm" or causing other strange interactions with character advancement. Additionally, the challenge rating of the liches presented here does not factor in their ability to rejuvenate, as each encounter with the lich may vary wildly depending on the circumstances. The exception to this is the eternal lich, which can recover so quickly that any encounter with the creature requires a party act swiftly to ensure the liches demise if they do not wish to face dire consequences.

psychically assaulting any creatures it detects with its Insatiable Greed. The creature is relentless, focusing on a single enemy with single-minded ferocity before consuming its soul and moving on to the next target. The demidracolich uses Curse of Greed on characters it believes to be healers or supports, preventing them from aiding their allies who are critically wounded or otherwise suffering. Unless it has a pitiable lair, the demidracolich should have considerable time to assault intruders before meeting face to face.

Once it can address intruders head on, the demidracolich unleashes its Vile Breath and Traumatizing Presence for maximum effect, trying to disable and terrify as many targets as possible. Unless a creature proves immune to its Psychic Assault attack, the demidracolich avoids moving into melee range. When faced with more than a single powerful magical defense or effect, the demidracolich may unleash its Disrupting Roar to extinguish the hopes of spellcasters seeking to turn the tide of battle.

Easier Tactics – The demidracolich holds off on its Psychic Assault attacks, curious to see its enemies in person. Once combat has been joined, the demidracolich refrains from using its Traumatizing Presence and Vile Breath back to back, giving ample time for the party to recover after each devastating ability.

Harder Tactics – The demidracolich will pepper any enemies with its Psychic Assault as soon as they come within range. When face to face in combat, the demidracolich will open with its Traumatizing Presence, then using subsequent rounds to unleash its Vile Breath on creatures vulnerable to damage. It will quickly knock out weak creatures, seeking to consume their souls and take them out of the fight permanently.

The Demidracolich

There are some quantities the mortal mind is simply incapable of conceiving. When I heard of a creature whose wealth could put the greatest of dragons to shame, I failed to comprehend how truly extraordinary that claim is. It is almost comical that such an unfathomably powerful being like a demidracolich would be its own undoing, but as wiser men than I have said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." I am sure the promise of wealth beyond imagining will attract the usual raggedy bunch of hopefuls looking for a quick score, but I'm not optimistic about their chances. I think it best for the world these creatures be left well enough alone. No good can come from antagonizing them.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Artillery

Favors: Attacks (Magical Weapons), Paladins, Rangers, Warlocks

Foils: Fighters, Rangers, Sorcerers, Wisdom (Low), Wizards

PLOT HOOKS

The Greed of Dragons. Four young dragons seek to rob the lair of a demidracolich and are willing to split the treasure with a party of adventurers that will accompany them into battle. The dragons know the layout of the lair but lack the magical ability to bypass many of the traps and wards that stand in defense of the hoard.

Deep Delves. Belligerent dwarven archeologists have been steadily unearthing an ancient tomb, drawn in by signs of great treasure and historical significance. The nearby gnome community has taken a dim view of these operations but note that the dwarves seem protected by a psychic influence that slays any who attempt to stop them.

Epic Comeback. A demidracolich that has been left alone for centuries has been unusually active. Slowly clawing its way back to sentience, the undead monstrosity is getting fed a steady diet of souls by an unknown benefactor. It is suspected the creature will soon undergo a second evolution, becoming an even greater evil of horrific power.

TREASURE

Demidracoliches exist because their wealth was so excessive that it consumed every aspect of their existence. Such a treasure hoard is beyond conception, able to finance a small nation for a century. However, the wealth of a demidracolich is cursed, having merged with the creature's phylactery as a part of its evolution. To destroy a demidracolich's phylactery, at least half of the creature's hoard must be obliterated or made worthless. Removing anything from the hoard accomplishes nothing; the items mysteriously vanish within 1d4 days, reappearing in the demidracolich's possession. When DMing a demidracolich that your players miraculously overcome, you should present them with an extraordinary array of items and treasure. It is recommended that a demidracolich hoard contains at minimum 1 million gp in currency or luxury materials, two legendary magical items, three very rare magical items, and four rare magical items. Half of each of these types of treasure must be obliterated to destroy the demidracolich's phylactery.

ECOLOGY

A demidracolich is barely aware of the world around it. It has no reason to leave its hoard and will never voluntarily do so. However, who and what the demidracolich was when it was a dracolich plays a huge role in its "life." Not all dragons laired deep beneath the earth or at the far-flung corners of the world. Some were overlords of great nations, prominently housed to better subjugate the world around them. A dracolich must have had extraordinary success to attain a level of wealth required to become a demidracolich. Each was significant in their own right, prominent figures that were legendary even among dragonkind. There has never been a demidracolich whose name was not once whispered in fear and awe, their lairs famous locations well known to many.

The Lich Lord

While exploring the frozen wastes, I came upon a great valley filled with the dead. Frozen in place, each of the ten thousand soldiers stood at attention, flying banners emblazoned with a runic symbol I did not recognize. As I strode between their ranks, a great storm came suddenly upon me, and as one the legion began to shake off the layers of ice that held them. I don't think I've ever cast teleport that fast, and even then I suspect my escape was a narrow one. I have no desire to return to that accursed place. Some things are better left unknown.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Elite
Favors: Barbarians, Bards, Clerics, Healing, Mobility (High), Paladins
Foils: Attack Bonus (Low), Druids, Monks, Sorcerers, Spells (Disabling), Wizards

DEMIDRACOLICH

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 248 (31d8 + 109)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	21 (+5)	10 (+0)	28 (+9)	26 (+8)	25 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +13, Int +17, Wis +16, Cha +15
Skills Perception +24, Stealth +13
Damage Resistances force; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, stunned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., Insatiable Greed 500 ft. (see traits), passive Perception 34
Languages —
Challenge 25 (75,000 XP)

TRAITS

Insatiable Greed. The demidracolich can detect and pinpoint the exact location of any object or collection of wealth worth at least 500 gp within 500 feet of it. If something the demidracolich is aware of via this feature is being worn or carried by a creature, the demidracolich can pinpoint the exact location of that creature as well.

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

Rejuvenation. If it has a hoard, a destroyed demidracolich gains a new body in 1d4 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the hoard.

Soul Harvester. When the demidracolich reduces a living creature to 0 hit points, the creature dies instantly and its soul is consumed by the demidracolich. The demidracolich increases its hit point maximum by twice the consumed creature's Constitution score, and it regains an equivalent amount of hit points. This increase to the demidracolich's hit points last until it finishes a long rest. A creature slain in this manner cannot be restored to life unless a *wish* spell or similar magic is used to restore its soul.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage, 10 (3d6) necrotic damage, and 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Disrupting Roar. The demidracolich unleashes a roar that disrupts the very fabric of magic. Spells and magical effects within 30 feet of the demidracolich end immediately, and creatures that can cast spells within the area must succeed on a DC 25 Intelligence saving throw or be unable to cast spells for 1 minute. A creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Psychic Assault. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 5 ft./range 500 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 35 (10d6) psychic damage. If the demidracolich knows the target's exact location, the target cannot have cover from this attack.

Traumatizing Presence. Each creature of the demidracolich's choice that is within 120 feet of it and aware of it must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened in this manner, a creature is vulnerable to all damage dealt by the demidracolich and cannot perceive creatures other than the demidracolich with its senses.

A creature that cannot see the demidracolich can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the demidracolich's Traumatizing Presence for the next hour.

Vile Breath (Recharge 5–6). The demidracolich exhales a cloud of vile gas in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must attempt a DC 25 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) necrotic damage and 45 (10d8) poison damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The demidracolich 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. The demidracolich regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Bite. The demidracolich makes a Bite attack.

Curse of Greed (Costs 2 Actions). The demidracolich targets one creature whose presence it is aware of within 500 feet with a dread curse. The target must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or be magically cursed. Until the curse ends, the target cannot target allied creatures with actions, effects, or spells and cannot willingly relinquish items in its possession.

Flight. The demidracolich moves up to its speed.

Psychic Assault (Costs 2 Actions). The demidracolich makes a Psychic Assault attack.

LICH LORD

Woe to those who oppose a lich lord. Supreme commanders of legions of undead, these profane creatures are born with a psychotic hatred for all life. When a death knight swears eternal loyalty to a lich, it may speak a series of ancient oaths ringing with primordial evil. Ancient, dark magic then binds the death knight to the undead spellcaster, merging their essences into an undead monstrosity of martial power and runic magic. Now beyond redemption and nearly impossible to destroy, a lich lord appears as a dark knight wielding an evil blade. Its presence is pure malevolence, with only a pair of glowing eyes indicating a fearsome intelligence behind impenetrable armor.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a lich lord with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

LICH LORD LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Lich lords have forsaken their formidable spellcasting for powerful runic magic. Their blades can cleave through nearly anything, and legions of undead follow their every command. Only the mightiest of heroes can oppose them, and even those should probably have some backup just in case.
23	A lich lord can raise an army of powerful undead by reaving the souls of those it slays. Against mighty enemies it will activate powerful magical runes, allowing it to customize its fighting style against almost any opponent. Staying at range provides little defense against a lich lord, which can unleash devastating blasts of necrotic energy.
29	Lich lords are conquerors and generals. If you can catch one alone, it's the best chance you'll get to bring it down. Otherwise, you best have an army of your own to face the legions of undead bound to serve it. Once the lich lord is slain, the undead it controlled will be aimless and leaderless, able to be dispatched with far greater ease.

TACTICS

Brutally powerful, a lich lord leads its armies from the front to better generate new undead for its armies. Each lich lord is a brilliant tactician and will organize even the most ramshackle undead into an effective and focused fighting force. A lich lord always fights effectively alongside its allies, combining their most powerful abilities with deadly synergy. The creature is a melee powerhouse, using its Runic Warding feature to maximize its potential. If the lich lord is doing well, it uses Plague and Ice runes to better slay its foes, using Gore, Oblivion, and Shadow runes to defend against troublesome assaults.

Easier Tactics – The lich lord should be aided by a small number of undead servants or should be alone. It takes on opponents one at a time, moving to engage the nearest foes until they lie died at the its feet. It refrains from using its Runic Empowerment feature unless in desperate straits and will not use its Soul Reaper feature if an enemy is struck down.

Harder Tactics – Flank the lich lord with powerful undead, typically a vampire or lich as a lieutenant alongside several foot soldiers. The lich lord is content letting the minions bear the brunt of the initial assault, using its Shadow rune to teleport close to the vulnerable characters. It saves its two reactions on hand for its Parry feature until there is nothing left to make attacks against it.

PLOT HOOKS

Frozen Legion. A massive force of undead has been gathered in the icy mountains. A lich lord is responsible, with plans to unleash countless zombies, skeletons, and even fouler creatures upon those living in more temperate lands. No army can stand against such a force. The lich lord commanding the dead must be assassinated by any means necessary.

An Honorable Death. A lich lord seeks a worthy warrior who can finally put it to rest and has been secretly sponsoring adventuring parties to train

LORD OF HOLLOWS

The ambition and power of a lich lord need not be self-serving. Some seek to make the world a better place for their people. Their uniquely timeless perspective and unparalleled experience in matters of leadership make them effective leaders. One such lich lord is the infamous Lord of Hollows, who has created a refuge for undead in the ancient city where he once ruled. In its shadowed alleys the dead can find a welcoming community dedicated to their interests, the peace strictly preserved by the powerful lich lord and his loyal servants. The living are not welcome in the Lord of Hollows's grand necropolis unless by express invitation, a precedent many would do well to respect. Lich lords who share in the Lord of Hollows's desire to be more than conquering tyrants and truly rule as rightful leaders are mystically empowered by an unknown force. The Lord of Hollows and other lich lords like him have a challenge rating of 29 (135,000 XP) and gain the following features.

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

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The lich 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. The lich regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Activate Rune. The lich deactivates a rune currently active via its Runic Warding feature and activates a different rune of its choice.

Greatsword. The lich makes a Greatsword attack.

Summon Undead (Costs 2 Actions). The lich magically summons two wights or two wraiths in unoccupied spaces it can see within 120 feet. The summoned undead are friendly to the lich and follow its every command (no action required). Instead of rolling initiative the summoned undead may choose to take their turns immediately after the lich. The undead last 1 hour before decaying into dust, and the lich lord cannot have more than ten undead summoned in this manner at a time.

up a worthy opponent. The lich begins to believe the characters are capable of finally giving it a good fight and is revealed as one of their benefactors who has been bankrolling them since their first day on the "job."

Blackmail. A powerful light cleric has stolen a lich lord's phylactery and is using it as leverage to command the undead monstrosity. Many question the safety—and even sanity—of such a relationship, even if done in the name of a holy cause.

TREASURE

When a lich transforms into a lich lord, it may choose to merge its phylactery with a powerful magical blade in a profane, runic ritual. Doing so transforms the weapon into a potent, unholy relic of impressive might, but at the cost of having to wield the phylactery as a weapon. Such phylacteries are called *runeblades*, which are as dangerous as they are valuable.

LICH LORD

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 23 (magical plate)
Hit Points 563 (49d8 + 343)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	12 (+1)	25 (+7)	17 (+3)	29 (+9)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +18, Con +15, Int +11, Wis +17, Cha +13
Skills Athletics +18, Insight +17, Intimidation +13, Perception +17, Religion +11
Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 27
Languages understands all languages but can only speak to the dead
Challenge 27 (105,000 XP)

TRAITS

General of Undeath. Undead within 1 mile of the lich lord with a CR of 10 or lower are charmed for as long as they remain within the area. An undead charmed in this manner uses the lich lord's proficiency bonus (+8) instead of its own and deals an additional 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on successful hits with its attacks.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed lich lord gains a new body in 24 hours, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

Runic Warding. The lich lord is adorned with magical runes that grant it supernatural powers. At the start of each of its turns, the lich lord can choose to activate one of the following runes, which grant the lich lord the rune's associated properties for as long as the rune remains active. When the lich lord activates a rune in this manner, any other currently active runes deactivate.

- **Gore.** When the lich lord deals damage, it gains temporary hit points equal to the damage dealt (rounded down, minimum of 1).
- **Ice.** The lich lord is surrounded in a thick storm of ice in a 60-foot-radius sphere centered on the lich that moves with it. Living creatures in the area have their speed halved, and they cannot take bonus actions or reactions.
- **Oblivion.** Spells and magical effects affecting the lich lord have their durations reduced to 1 round, and the lich lord takes half damage from spells.
- **Plague.** When a living creature takes damage from the lich lord for the first time on a turn, it must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw or contract a deadly disease called "lich blight." When a creature suffering from lich blight rolls damage dice, it instead rolls minimum damage. When a creature succeeds on this saving throw or the effect ends for it, it becomes immune to lich blight for 24 hours.
- **Shadow.** The lich lord becomes invisible, and as a bonus action on each of its turns it can teleport to an unoccupied space it can see within 120 feet in dim light or darkness.

Soul Reaper. The lich lord's weapons are magical. When the lich lord hits with a weapon attack, it deals an extra 36 (8d8) cold damage (included in the attack). If the lich lord kills a humanoid creature with a weapon attack, it can take a reaction to reap the creature's soul. When the lich lord does so, the target is immediately raised as an undead completely loyal to the lich. The type of undead created depends on the CR or character level of the target.

- **CR/Level 1—6.** Wight
- **CR/Level 7—12.** Wraith
- **CR/Level 13+.** Vampire

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lich lord makes four attacks, or two attacks and takes one other action. The lich lord can forgo making one or more attacks it would make to gain an additional reaction for each attack it forgoes. These extra reactions last until the start of lich lord's next turn.

Death Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +17 to hit, range 300 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (4d12 + 9) necrotic damage.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6 + 10) slashing damage and 36 (8d8) cold damage.

Runic Empowerment (Recharge 6). All of the lich lord's runes become activated, and the lich lord gains their benefits according to its Runic Warding feature. All but one of these runes deactivate at the end of the lich lord's next turn.

REACTIONS

Parry. When another creature the lich can see hits the lich with a melee attack, the lich can use its reaction to add 6 to its AC until the end of the current turn, potentially causing the attack to miss it.

Runeblade

Weapon (greatsword), legendary (requires attunement)

A *runeblade* is a weapon of pure evil that serves as both a weapon of mass destruction and a repository for a lich lord's soul. Each *runeblade* is unique, possessing a design that is reflective of the lich lord's personality and aesthetics.

You gain a +3 bonus to attack rolls with the weapon, and creatures cannot have resistance or immunity to damage dealt by an attack made with the *runeblade*. It has the following additional properties.

Curse. The *runeblade* is cursed. When you first become attuned to the *runeblade* or finish a long rest while attuned to the *runeblade*, you must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, you are compelled to commit a single evil act within the next 24 hours that results in the death of an innocent. If you fail to accomplish this task, the next time you hold the *runeblade* it consumes your soul, killing you instantly and preventing you from being restored to life by all but the most powerful magics.

Lifebreaker. Once per turn when you make a weapon attack with the *runeblade* against a living creature, you can choose to unleash a 90-foot cone of cleaving force. Each living creature in the area is targeted by your attack in addition to the original target, taking its damage on a successful hit.

Loyalty. You cannot be disarmed of the *runeblade* unless your hand is removed in the process, nor can you be compelled to relinquish possession of the *runeblade* against your will.

Personality. The *runeblade* has the personality of the lich lord to whom it belongs. While each lich lord is unique, the process of becoming such a creature invariably twists one's soul toward evil. This makes the *runeblade* a malevolent and vile companion, always seeking to free itself from its confinement and once again menace the world.

Sentience. If a lich lord is slain, its soul is transferred to the *runeblade* and transforms it into a sentient weapon with the lich lord's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. The *runeblade* can perceive everything you can perceive, otherwise it has hearing out to a range of 120 feet.

The weapon is in effect the lich lord, containing all of the lich's experience and knowledge. While in this state, the *runeblade* can communicate telepathically with you while you are attuned to it. If a non-evil creature is attuned to the *runeblade*, the lich lord's Rejuvenation feature is suppressed while so attuned.

ECOLOGY

Lich lords are powerful leaders and great warriors. They care little for dusty libraries and deep dungeons, preferring to crusade across the world in search of greater power and new lands to dominate. If a lich lord is lying low, it is because some foul machination is in the works that is not ready to be unleashed. Only complete subjugation is enough to satisfy a lich lord. Any resistance, disagreement, or dissention by those a lich lord encounters guarantees a violent confrontation. The living can survive under a lich lord's care only if they capitulate utterly to its demands, becoming a part of the creature's dark empire. Every lich lord has a domain over which it holds sway, filled with dark beings unfailingly loyal or terrified into submission.

ETERNAL LICH

A lich's taste for souls is legendary. With its great longevity, a lich may consume hundreds—if not thousands—of souls to sustain its existence. In rare cases, a lich's hunger for souls drives it to feed to dangerous excess. In an act of unforgivable genocide, a lich can consume the spirits of an entire nation, obliterating hundreds of thousands. This unpardonable evil invokes a dark ascension, allowing the lich to achieve a truly immortal existence infused with unrivaled psychic power. These blessedly rare eternal liches are ancient, prime evils—timeless, vile, and unstoppable. Appearing as ghostly vestiges of their mortal forms, these creatures could be easily mistaken for more common undead were it not for the psychic influence they emit at all times. Mysterious voices no one else can hear, levitating objects, and constant inexplicable pain betray the presence of an eternal lich.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an eternal lich with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (History) ability check.

ETERNAL LICH LORE

DC	INFORMATION
19	An eternal lich is the ultimate expression of undead malevolence. It has no phylactery, instead possessing an immortal spirit which can possess and devour the souls of other creatures. Killing such a creature is nearly impossible, and destroying it permanently has never been accomplished in recorded history.
24	Having forsaken its magic for raw psychic power, an eternal lich can shred the minds of its enemies as easily as it crushes bodies with telekinetic power. They can even "pilot" the bodies of their victims, using their fleshy forms as disguises to better achieve their nefarious goals.
30	Once killed, an eternal lich's spirit will seek out a nearby creature and possess it. It will quickly consume the victim's soul, reconstituting its essence at alarming speed. Only the sturdiest creatures can survive this profane corruption for more than a few hours. None know what happens if the eternal lich is exorcised while in this state.

TACTICS

An eternal lich has little need for devious plots or schemes. It attacks with overwhelming force, scattering its foes using its True Telekinesis action. With its ability to concentrate on multiple effects simultaneously, the lich can cast *wall of force* innumerable times to create a maze of impassible barriers. From there, the lich can systematically dismantle its foes, lowering their defenses with *synaptic static*, enslaving their minds with *dominate person*, and manipulating their tactics with *mass suggestion.* Able to pass through solid objects and fly, the lich will position itself optimally when casting *psychic scream*. Stunned enemies are summarily subjected to the lich's *disintegrate* spell, ensuring they do not get back up.

Remember the eternal lich is psionic, generating spells without the need for any components. This can make combat with the lich incredibly confusing, as many of the effects appear to generate from thin air or without any effort on the lich's part. Its Lifesense feature can detect the presence of any living creature, preventing enemies from staying hidden or attacking the lich with surprise. If facing serious foes, the lich will unleash its Death Bomb before unleashing a fresh wave of *disintegrate* spells.

Easier Tactics – The lich will never use its Death Bomb or Power Overwhelming and will refrain from scattering the party with its True Telekinesis action. It will rapidly switch targets, having little concern for its own health or sense of urgency. The lich will count on its Eternal Evil feature to recover from any defeat, with a more devious plan for round two.

Harder Tactics – The lich will begin combat with a *synaptic static* and *psychic scream*, using its first set of legendary actions on its Power Overwhelming feature. Once it has gained these benefits, it will use its Death Bomb feature on the next turn for catastrophic damage. It will then throw the characters into the Death Bomb's effect with True Telekinesis, using *mass suggestion* to prevent any allies from aiding beleaguered creatures. If injured below half its hit point maximum, the lich will use *negative energy flood* to heal itself at least once per round as a legendary action.

PLOT HOOKS

Ancient Terror. An ancient vault from a race of humanoids long thought extinct has been opened, revealing the source of their downfall. Free to ravage the world once more, an eternal lich starts things off with a bang by slaughtering a nation and possessing the body of its king. If the lich is to be stopped, heroes of the world must act soon and discover a means to defeat the monstrosity.

Inheritance. A young princess has made a startingly recovery from a deadly illness. Her parents were not so lucky, dying a few days later under mysterious circumstances. The girl has seized control of the kingdom, marshaling the once-peaceful realm toward war and silencing all opposition. In truth her soul has been consumed by an eternal lich who now puppets the body of the princess in a sinister bid for power.

Plea Bargain. An eternal lich has been placed in protective custody by a holy order, to the outrage of the world. Why such a noble force would choose to aid the vile creature is unknown, but already the bounty on the lich's head has surpassed 1 million gp. Should the creature be slain, it may escape and be free to sell its secrets to the highest bidder.

TREASURE

An eternal lich has little need for paltry trinkets or gold. Only the most powerful of magical artifacts could improve the lethality of the already formidable undead. Wherever it lairs, an eternal lich will keep at least one of these artifacts, along with a wealth of research and knowledge that surpasses any mortal scholar. Instead of their usual random properties, these artifacts always have five major beneficial properties.

The Eternal Lich

Evil prevails. That is the only explanation I have for how the universe would allow such a monstrosity to come into existence. I have known of only one eternal lich, and its bloody mark upon history counts atrocities beyond measure. Understanding these creatures requires I be more of a historian than an ecologist. Each is an ancient being whose origins predate all but the most well-preserved recorded histories. They fancy themselves immortal, but I am not entirely convinced an eternal lich cannot be destroyed. I must endeavor to discover how this is done, as Archmagister King is itching to see just how well one can handle a meteor swarm.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Monks, Paladins, Radiant (Damage), Saving Throws (High), Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Bards, Druids, Fighters, Rangers, Sorcerers, Stealth

ECOLOGY

An eternal lich has all the time in the world to accomplish its goals. Their objectives are always far reaching, with each step of their master plans determined centuries in advance. Their lairs are well hidden, affording them access to a healthy number of vessels to possess and amount of political influence to wield. Most creatures that work on behalf of an eternal lich rarely know they are doing so. And that is just the way the lich likes it. When operating in the open, the eternal lich is a fearsome force of unbridled destruction. It is quick to enslave useful pawns and dispose of worthless or disappointing minions. It is cold, emotionless, and ruthlessly logical, a temperament mastered after millennia of evil.

ETERNAL LICH

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18
Hit Points 475 (38d8 + 304)
Speed 0 ft., 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	26 (+8)	27 (+8)	30 (+10)	29 (+9)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Dex +17, Con +17, Int +19, Cha +17
Skills Arcana +19, Deception +17, History +28, Insight +18, Perception +18, Persuasion +17, Stealth +17
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft., Lifesense 300 ft. (see traits), passive Perception 28
Languages telepathy 300 ft.
Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

TRAITS

Eternal Evil. If destroyed by conventional means, the eternal lich is not truly slain. Instead, a fragment of the eternal lich's soul seeks out a living humanoid creature within 10 miles of the site of the its destruction and attempts to consume the humanoid's soul, rejuvenating the eternal lich's essence in the process. If there are no eligible humanoids within range, the eternal lich's soul is utterly obliterated, and it cannot return to life by any known means.

If the eternal lich successfully possesses a humanoid, over the next 24 hours the target must attempt on a DC 27 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour as it struggles to survive. If it fails three saving throws in this manner, the creature dies. If a creature dies while affected by this feature, the eternal lich consumes its soul and becomes active again, regaining all of its hit points. If the creature manages to survive for the duration or if the eternal lich is expelled from the target's body during the possession attempt, the eternal lich is utterly obliterated and cannot return to life by any known means.

When the eternal lich returns to life in this manner, it can choose to possess the body of the target, becoming indistinguishable from the target when it was alive (although close examination reveals that the target is dead). Doing so grants the eternal lich a number of temporary hit points equal to the target's hit point maximum, and for as long as the eternal lich possesses the body it retains the target's Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution ability scores and loses its immunity to conditions except the charmed, frightened, and poisoned conditions. The temporary hit points gained from this feature cannot be replaced with temporary hit points from another source, and the effect ends if the eternal lich takes an action to end it or if its temporary hit points are reduced to 0, causing the eternal lich to reappear in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body.

Incorporeal Movement. The eternal lich 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.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The lich's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 27, +17 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components, and it does not need to maintain concentration to maintain their effects for the duration:

At will: *dominate person*, *negative energy flood*†, *synaptic static*†, *wall of force*
3/day each: *disintegrate* (8th level), *dominate monster*, *feeblemind*, *mass suggestion*, *teleport*
2/day each: *psychic scream*†, *weird*

Lifesense. The eternal lich can detect and pinpoint the exact location of any living creature within 300 feet of it.

Mythic Resistance. When the eternal lich fails a saving throw, it can expend one of its unspent legendary actions to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eternal lich casts two spells, one of which must be a spell it can cast at will.

Death Bomb (1/Day). The eternal lich fires a ball of pure negative energy at a point it can see within 1 mile. Each creature in a 30-foot-radius cylinder that is 100 feet high centered on that point must attempt a DC 27 Constitution saving throw, taking 100 points of necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this effect dies. Additionally, a 100-foot-high ring of negative energy appears at the impact point and expands outward from the affected area for 10 minutes, moving 30 feet away from the edge of the cylinder at the start of each of the eternal lich's turns for the duration. A creature that comes into contact with the wall for the first time in a round must attempt a DC 27 Constitution saving throw, taking 100 points of necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

True Telekinesis. The eternal lich targets up to four creatures or objects it is aware of within 300 feet of it. Each target must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or be subjected to one of the following effects. If the eternal lich is ever more than 300 feet away from a target affected by this feature, the effect ends (when applicable).

Crush. The target takes 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage.

Restrain. The target is moved up to 30 feet and restrained. A restrained creature can be suspended in the air if the eternal lich desires and may attempt a DC 27 Strength saving throw at the end of each of its turns to end the effect. This feature cannot affect creatures or objects weighing more than 100,000 pounds.

Shove. The eternal lich throws the target up to 120 feet in a direction of its choice. If the target is a held object, the wielder must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or relinquish the object. This feature cannot affect creatures or objects weighing more than 100,000 pounds.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The eternal lich 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. The eternal lich regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cast a Spell. The eternal lich casts a spell that it can cast at will.

Power Overwhelming (Costs 3 Actions). Until the end of the eternal lich's next turn, whenever it deals damage it instead deals double damage.

Read Minds (Costs 2 Actions). The eternal lich reads the surface thoughts of each creature with which it is able to be in telepathic contact. Until the end of the eternal lich's next turn, affected creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks against the eternal lich.

Telekinesis. The eternal lich takes its True Telekinesis action but can only target a single object or creature.

† This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*.

Hadala-Lafeda (Fey of the Deep)

Far beneath the surface of the ocean where the sun has never shone lurk the hadala-lafeda. These cunning and mysterious fey prey upon humanoids, using fearsome magic to drag countless sailors to a watery grave. More than a few tales of sea monsters and haunted waters can be attributed to the hadala-lafeda, who strike without warning. Alien nightmares that shatter the resolve of the most stalwart paladin, these fey bring bizarre and frightening power to bear against the surface world. Their civilizations are ancient, with a culture and language obscured from all recorded history. From their sunken cities the hadala-lafeda embark on great fishing expeditions, catching surface-dwellers by the hundreds. Those who wish for rescue best abandon hope, for only the most powerful and daring can return from the mystical oceanic depths the fey call home.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN – MAGIC AND DEEP-SEA COMBAT

None of the hadala-lafeda's abilities are magical. This means they function in an *antimagic field* and cannot be countered or dispelled. Dealing with the ocean depths without magic is already a formidable challenge—coupling it with deadly monsters is blatantly unfair. But if you warn your players up front about the dangers and present it as an optional challenge, a group of hadala-lafeda in a deep-sea *antimagic field* can be an incredibly satisfying puzzle for your players to solve. Just make sure you give them a suitable reward for their efforts.

TALIEN'S NOTES

I hold it to be true that if we were meant to explore the ocean's depths, we'd have gills. Since last I checked, we do not. I consider it a matter of course to remain on dry land, well away from the many terrors that lurk below the thunders of the upper deep. But those terrors make their influence known upon the surface world at times, and it falls to scholars like myself to catalogue their abilities so we might be better prepared. Of these threats, the Hadala-Lafeda are paramount. An organized society of fey dwells in the darkest ocean pits, capable of manipulating water and minds with equal skill. I count this race of vicious fey as another fantastic reason why the ocean cannot be trusted.

HADALA-LOPHI

The predominant females of hadala-lafeda society, hadala-lophi (often called lophi) are swift swimmers with a gift for illusion and enchantment. Appearing as a frightful combination of mermaid and anglerfish, a lophi's body glows with an eerie bioluminescence. As the master manipulators of the hadala-lafeda, these creatures "fish" upon the surface of the water with their hypnotic lures. Entire crews have dived overboard in pursuit of a lophi's alluring light, never to be seen or heard from again. Each lophi is a master manipulator and cunning strategist. What they cannot take, they will swindle others for, weaving a complex web of deceptions that rarely becomes unraveled. Their voices are surprisingly pleasant despite their fearsome appearance, echoing with deep tones that travel great distances underwater.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a hadala-lophi with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

HADALA-LOPHI LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Deep in the ocean lurk the hadala-lafeda, a race of ancient fey that have been shrouded in mystery for millennia. The hadala-lophi are the females of the species and can enchant their victims and compel them to swim so deep they never see the surface again.
20	A hadala-lophi has two primary means of attack: it can conjure a ball of light that charms nearby creatures unless they avert their eyes, and it can manipulate water telekinetically to batter, restrain, and constrict its prey. The hadala-lophi is capable of delivering painful bites, but that is a last resort.
25	Creatures bitten and grappled by hadala-lophi can't breathe underwater by any known means. Furthermore, the hydrokinesis ability of the hadala-lophi can literally force the air out of a creature's lungs, making the best swimmer desperate for another breath. The hadala-lophi are not particularly hardy and are vulnerable to magical effects that require strong fortitude to endure.

TACTICS

Spend a hadala-lophi's first turn using Lure of the Depths to conjure its hypnotizing light in a nearby space. After that, use Hydrokinesis while maintaining a safe distance from melee combatants. Creatures that



The Hadala-Lafeda

Hadala-lafeda exhibit unusually pronounced sexual dimorphism, particularly for a fey species. It is uncertain whether those distinctions developed as a result of their long stay on the material plane, or if they were a deliberate choice made to better adapt them for life in the deep oceans. The hadala-lophi, a name roughly taken from Sylvan and meaning "female deep dweller," are adept enchantresses. They project a source of hypnotizing light which lures the unwary into their domain, drawing them deeper and deeper until they drown themselves. In this way, the hadala-lophi acquire food and resources for their people, making them grim anglers of a sort.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Barbarians, Charmed (Protection from), Druids, Strength (High), Wizards

Foils: Constitution (Low), Mobility (High), Monks, Rangers, Rogues

are charmed by Lure of the Depths suffer additional damage when hit by the lophi's allies, so keep the lophi alive as long as possible to keep the damage piling up. Don't forget that the lophi's Bioluminescence trait imposes disadvantage on attack rolls against it made by creatures within 30 feet.

Only use the lophi's Bite attack in dire circumstances or if you have an isolated and weak character. Those with low Strength and Dexterity scores will struggle to escape from the lophi's grapple, and the lophi prevents grappled characters from breathing underwater by any means. This can take an isolated character from in trouble to dead in short order.

Easier Tactics – Delay use of Lure of the Depths for a few rounds, and try to position it so it won't hit the entire party. The less you use this ability, the easier the fight will be. You can also prefer Bite over Hydrokinesis, as it does less damage on average and can only affect a single target.

Harder Tactics – Start the encounter with Lure of the Depths already active, drawing the party into a fight by moving it closer to them or having it lie in wait around a corner. After the party engages, use Hydrokinesis on every turn, focusing on reducing the duration a creature can hold its breath. If you use this ability on characters with a low Constitution score, they'll soon start to drown. Against parties that have *water breathing* or similar abilities, instead use Hydrokinesis to impose the restrained condition, making such creatures easy prey for the hadala-lophi's allies.

PLOT HOOKS

Gone Fishing. An entire fishing village has been vacated in the span of a single night. Footprints of what must have been a dozen families lead down to the water, with no sign of violence or resistance to be found. Only a few guard dogs remain as witnesses, distraught over the fate of their masters.

HADALA-LOPHI

Medium fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (coral armor)
Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Int +7, Wis +8
Skills Athletics +10, History +12, Perception +8, Persuasion +15, Stealth +8
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 300 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Hadali, Sylvan
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Bioluminescence. The lophi emits a disorienting and sparkling light from its body. While emitting this light the lophi sheds dim light for 30 feet, and creatures that can see the lophi have disadvantage on attack rolls against it. The lophi can choose to emit or suppress this light as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Deep Sea Dweller. The lophi is immune to the harmful effects of pressure at extreme depths and can breathe only underwater. Additionally, darkness of any kind (including magical darkness) does not impede a lophi's vision.

Sudden and Inevitable Betrayal. Attacks against creatures charmed by the lophi have advantage and deal an additional 18 (4d8) psychic damage on a hit.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d12 + 6) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 18). A creature grappled in this manner cannot breathe underwater.

Hydrokinesis. The lophi can use her thoughts to manipulate water within 60 feet of it. When the lophi takes this action, each creature of the lophi's choice in the area must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or take 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a success.

Additionally, when a creature fails the saving throw against this effect, the lophi can cause one of the following effects:

- The creature is restrained until the start of the lophi's next turn.
- The creature is moved up to 30 feet in a direction of the lophi's choice.
- If the creature is holding its breath, it reduces the amount of time it can hold its breath by 1 minute.
- If the creature is suffocating, it fails a death saving throw.
- A creature not in contact with a body of water is immune to the effects of this action.

Lure of the Depths. The lophi creates a 1-foot-diameter sphere of hypnotizing light in an unoccupied space it can see. The light emits bright light to a distance of 30 feet and dim light 30 feet beyond that. Creatures of the lophi's choice that can see the light and start their turn within 60 feet of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed. A creature so charmed must spend all of its movement on each of its turns to move toward the light, and uses its action to dash toward the light if it ends its movement more than 5 feet from it. If the creature ends its turn and cannot see the light, the effect ends.

Unless a creature is surprised, at the start of each of its turns it can close its eyes to avoid the saving throw. If the creature does so, it becomes blinded until the start of its next turn. If the creature sees the light in the meantime, it must immediately make the saving throw.

As an action, the lophi can move the light up to 60 feet. The light lasts for 1 hour, until the lophi creates another light, or until the lophi dismisses it as an action.

Gold Rush. A legendary pirate washes up on the beaches of a prosperous port city, raving about "ghost lights" and "teeth of the deep" that took her crew and sunk her vessel. The ship was carrying considerable wealth, and many captains depart to its last known location looking to loot a small fortune, with little thought to what sunk it in the first place.

Grisly Tribute. A tribe of sea elves sacrifices its elderly population to a nearby colony of hadala-lophi, which are running a grim protection racket. The practice has carried on so long it has become a part of the elves' culture, where the lophi are revered as avatars of a cruel sea god.

TREASURE

Lophi collect an impressive amount of loot from their catches. While they understand the value of treasure, the creatures have little use for surface-world coinage and heavy metals. Such materials are typically smelted down and reformed into bizarre totems of alien artistry. Every time a lophi makes a successful catch, a pearl is faceted onto the totem's surface. These items are prized by powerful evil creatures, symbolizing supernatural evil prevailing over pathetic mortals. A typical totem is worth at least 10,000 gp in rare materials, but five times that to any evil creature with a sophisticated taste in art.

ECOLOGY

Thriving in an environment inhospitable to most forms of life, the hadala-lophi are creatures of darkness that embrace a nomadic lifestyle. Lophi venture out of their deep cities on frequent expeditions, traveling to to the surface only at night. These fey look for signs of humanoid activity the way a fisherman would scout a good fishing spot, mapping out shipping lanes and other avenues of frequent activity while waiting for the precise moment to strike so as to leave no witnesses. The most skilled lophi who bring in the largest catches are honored above all others with the title of "master angler." While not in search of prey, lophi engage in storytelling and singing, reveling in the spoils of recent victories. In the rare cases a lophi lowers herself to speak to a surface dweller, she is condescending and bestial. Respect and good manners are due only to the most powerful fey and others of its kind.

New Language: Hadali

The hadala-lafeda have fashioned a bizarre language of clicks and growls similar to the sounds made by whales and dolphins, called Hadali. This helps disguise their communication as the sounds of sea life, and when "shouted," words spoken in Hadali can be heard underwater up to 10 miles away. This language cannot be spoken above water and is notoriously difficult for humanoids to master, typically requiring tutelage by a hadala-lafeda and many years of practice.

HADALA-LEVINOSS

The massive males of the hadala-lafeda, levinoss are mighty leviathans with cruel and brutal cunning. With the upper body of a clawed, bioluminescent orca whale and the lower body of an octopus, a levinoss is an abominable nightmare befitting of its habitat. They are fast swimmers despite their bulk and, in addition to their martial prowess, can generate crushing maelstroms that drag creatures down deeper and deeper until they are lost in the darkness. Each levinoss bears innumerable battle scars earned from a lifetime of conflict, and they serve on the front lines against any serious threat to the hadala-lafeda. Their war cries echo throughout the deep, a clear warning to any who dare come near the sunken cities of the these fey.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a hadala-levinoss with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

HADALA-LEVINOSS LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Hadala-levinoss are male deep-sea fey that guard their cities and dwellings on the ocean floor. They are relentlessly aggressive, brutalizing all who trespass in the domain of the hadala-lafeda.
21	These swift-swimming brutes deal tremendous damage with their teeth and claws, and they can grapple creatures with twin tentacles that choke the air out of their victim's lungs. Their bioluminescence makes them difficult to attack directly, confusing and disorienting attackers that depend on sight.
27	The hadala-levinoss can create torrential whirlpools around themselves. Once created, this whirlpool traps creatures within it and can drag them down, deep into the ocean. While the hadala-levinoss is physically powerful, its mind is vulnerable to attacks, and magic that targets those of weak wills proves supremely effective.

TACTICS

The levinoss has simple tactics but nuanced abilities. Don't forget the effects of its Crushing Grappler trait, which can inhibit *water breathing* and spellcasting, as well as its Large and In Charge trait, granting advantage on almost all attack rolls and ability checks against a typical party.

Unless the hadala-levinoss is lying in wait, it should start any fight with its Bioluminescence active. Start by using by using its two Tentacle attacks on physically weak characters. With an Intelligence of 12, the levinoss knows the difference between an agile monk and a vulnerable wizard and will target the latter. The levinoss can only Bite targets that are grappled, while its Claw attack is best used to fend off those who try to help grappled companions. If the levinoss is reduced to fewer than half of its hit point maximum, it uses Whirlpool to attempt to split the party by dragging some of them down to the ocean floor. It continues moving downward until it hits the bottom of whatever area it is in, after which it resumes attacking.

The Hadala-Levinoss

You don't want to see a hadala-levinoss coming toward you. That would mean either you've stumbled into one of their cities and are about to meet a swift demise, or the hadala-lafeda are mobilizing for war and you're encountering their front line. Those are both poor situations to be in. Hadala-levinoss are capable of dragging dozens of victims into the ocean's abyss, and their raw strength makes them devastating warriors. Their only weakness is pride. They fear nothing, and for good reason. Perhaps you can use that against them, but I wouldn't bet against the levinoss.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Bards, Druids, Dexterity (High), Movement (Targeting), Wisdom (High), Sorcerers

Foils: Clerics, Dexterity (Low), Hit Point (Low), Paladins, Strength (Low), Wizards

Easier Tactics – Use the levinoss's Tentacle attacks on heavily armored and durable characters instead of targeting those that are weak and slow. You should also avoid using Whirlpool, as that ability can devastate an unprepared party.

Harder Tactics – Start the fight with the levinoss in hiding with Bioluminescence deactivated. Once the fight begins, use Whirlpool and move downward 60 feet, trying to split the party immediately. Keep Bioluminescence inactive so the levinoss disappears into the darkness with its captives. If the party gets more than 120 feet away, you can end Whirlpool and start attacking.

PLOT HOOKS

Washed Up. A hadala-levinoss has become trapped in a bay and is rampaging throughout the shallows in frustration. Fishermen are unable to make a living, and tourists wisely avoid the bay's pristine beaches. The locals don't care if the levinoss is freed or slain, just as long as the horrifying creature is no longer their problem.

HADALA-LEVINOSS

Gargantuan fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (coral armor)
Hit Points 261 (18d20 + 72)
Speed 5 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	6 (-2)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +9, Cha +3
Skills Athletics +14, Intimidation +8, Stealth +8
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 300 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages Hadali, Sylvan
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Bioluminescence. The levinoss emits a disorienting and sparkling light from its body. While emitting this light the levinoss sheds dim light for 120 feet and creatures that can see the levinoss have disadvantage on attack rolls against it. The levinoss can choose to emit or suppress this light as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Crushing Grappler. A creature grappled by the levinoss cannot speak or breathe. When a creature is grappled by the levinoss, the creature may use its reaction to begin holding its breath, immediately beginning to suffocate otherwise.

Deep Sea Dweller. The levinoss is immune to the harmful effects of pressure at extreme depths and can breathe only underwater. Additionally, darkness of any kind (including magical darkness) does not impede a levinoss's vision.

Large and In Charge. The levinoss has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks against creatures smaller than it. Additionally, on each of its turns, the levinoss can spend half its movement to deal 20 bludgeoning damage to an object or structure within 5 feet of it.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The levinoss makes four attacks: one with its Bite, one with its Claw, and two with its Tentacle.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one grappled target. *Hit:* 48 (6d12 + 9) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d8 + 9) slashing damage.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (1d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 22).

Whirlpool. If the levinoss is underwater, it may spin in place to generate a massive whirlpool in a 60-foot radius centered on it for 1 minute, which becomes difficult terrain. Everything in the area must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or take 33 (6d10) bludgeoning damage and be restrained by the swirling water. While the whirlpool is in effect, the levinoss must take its action on each of its turns to maintain the effect and cannot spend movement except to move downward. When the levinoss moves downward, everything restrained by the whirlpool moves with it.

As an action, a creature restrained by the whirlpool can attempt a DC 22 Strength (Athletics) ability check, freeing itself on a success.

New Exhibit. A mildly insane halfling sorcerer operates a magical aquarium and has acquired a fantastical new attraction: a hadala-levinoss. While the city officials were willing to put up with the halfling's eccentricities up untill now, housing such a monstrosity took it too far. Unfortunately, the tiny sorceress has skipped town, leaving an increasingly angry levinoss in a woefully small tank.

Tides of Darkness. A tribe of hadala-lafeda has lent a trio of levinoss to a nearby clan of sea devils. The jubilant creatures immediately prepare for war, with intentions to use the levinoss as a vanguard of living siege machines. If the creatures can be assassinated before they reach their target, much collateral damage can be avoided.

TREASURE

Savage and uncultured, a levinoss consumes food much like a shark would: by eating everything put in front of it. Their powerful digestive tracts can process most materials, but durable metals often get stuck in the stomach. This material is melded together and smoothed into a wondrous pearl of a mysterious metallic alloy. While levinoss rarely live long, the elders of their kind can have pearls the size of dinner plates. Unfortunately, the only way to safely remove one of these pearls is by slaying a levinoss and carving it open.

ECOLOGY

Levinoss do not fit well into hadala-lafeda society. They are too big, too aggressive, and too crude for the rest of the species. Defenders and protectors, hadala-levinoss guard the cities of the deep-sea fey, safely away from the more delicate aspects of lafeda civilization. They operate in pairs—one postures with its bioluminescent lights to catch an intruder's attention, while the other waits nearby for an ambush. Levinoss pride themselves on catching and killing any potential threat, and all hunger to test their might against a worthy adversary. It is the levinoss who truly understand the savage heart of the sea, passing this understanding on to each generation. Levinoss only grow stronger with age, and the greatest among them are granted the honorific title of "Dread Leviathan."

Levinoss Pearl

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This melon sized black pearl can be used as a spellcasting focus when held. If used as a spellcasting focus, the range of spells you cast while underwater is doubled.

HADALA-MEDUSAE

Matriarchs of the hadala-lafeda and potent oceanic manipulators, the hadala-medusae are capable of destroying a party of hardened adventurers alone. Appearing as anthropomorphic jellyfish shimmering with prismatic bioluminescence, medusae move with a slow but elegant grace. They are imperious leaders, destined to hold positions of authority and considerable experience. As royalty of lafeda society, medusae are always accompanied by a handpicked retinue of slaves and bodyguards. Not afraid to get their hands dirty, medusae will lead other creatures of the deep into battle, dragging foes down to the depths, never to be seen again. Their voices are always a dangerous whisper, and a medusae expects every creature present to hang on its every word.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a hadala-medusae with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

HADALA-MEDUSAE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	The matriarchs of the hadala-lafeda are potent hydromancers, masters of manipulating the seas. They are nearly immune to magic and possess cunning beyond measure. Don't expect to find one alone. They are noble fey of great means and influence.
23	Hadala-medusae can inflict paralysis with their tentacles, bestow foul curses that prevent even magical means of breathing underwater, and drag creatures from any depth all the way to the seafloor. Their abilities have tremendous range, and it is almost impossible to elude their wrath.
29	The only weakness of the hadala-medusae is that they are not exceptionally tough. Magic which requires physical endurance to resist can shut them down, but the caster must be gifted with knowledge of arcana or possess a prodigious intellect to overcome the medusae's magical resistances.

The Hadala-Medusae

The leaders and hatch-matrons of hadala-lafeda society are the hadala-medusae. These genius schemers are responsible for planning expeditions to the surface. They wield tremendous power against threats to the fey of the deep, unleashing psychokinetic might I have yet to see matched. Much like the humble jellyfish, a medusae's beauty is a deception that hides startling lethality. Those who fear a death by drowning would do well to avoid these creatures, as their powers can strip away almost any protection against the horrors of the ocean. I once watched a medusae drown a merfolk. I don't know how she did it, but I am sure it was no illusion.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Controller

Favors: Constitution (Targeting), Rangers, Rogues, Sorcerers, Stealth

Foils: Barbarians, Clerics, Intelligence (Low), Paladins, Strength (Low)

TACTICS

The hadala-medusae has several passive abilities that are crucial to its survival. First, its Hydro Shield trait takes effect when it rolls for initiative, giving it 150 temporary hit points and protecting it from critical hits and several debilitating conditions. Second, the Superior Magic Resistance ability applies to both spells and magical effects like a paladin's Divine Smite. Don't forget to apply it to each spell and ability, but only the first time it occurs. Remember, unlike spells, abilities are only considered a magical effect if they include the word "magical" in their descriptions.

On the medusae's first turn it should use True Hydrokinesis to restrain melee characters and move ranged characters and spellcasters into melee range of the medusae's allies, followed by either Curse of the Depths on a low-Constitution spellcaster or Tentacles on fragile characters that are nearby. Alternate between those two options on future turns, continuing to use True Hydrokinesis to keep melee characters out of close range and keep ranged characters next to the hadala-medusae's allies. Once the medusae loses its temporary hit points from Hydro Shield, use Watery Grave to potentially split the party and, depending on the location in which the fight is taking place, outright kill them. The locale has a huge effect on how powerful that ability is, so consider it carefully when planning an encounter with a hadala-medusae.

Easier Tactics – Don't use True Hydrokinesis every turn. This severely reduces the medusae's offensive power; if you also avoid using Watery Grave, the fight will be dramatically easier. The fey''s supporting retinue should consist mostly of weak slaves and other creatures that synergize poorly with the medusae's abilities.

Harder Tactics – Start the fight over a deep, deep drop to the ocean floor, and use True Hydrokinesis to reduce the time affected creatures can hold their breath by 3 minutes, then follow it up with Watery Grave. That by itself is enough to devastate most parties, likely splitting them up and leaving some suffocating characters on the ocean floor.

PLOT HOOKS

The Lost Empire. The archeological find of the millennium is discovered: an entire civilization that was dragged to the deepest part of the ocean. Presiding over this ancient site is a council of medusae and a massive colony of hadala-lafeda, for it was they who sunk the nation and took its capital for themselves.

Love Is Strange. A medusae has fallen in love with a surface-dweller and fled her colony. The lovers are desperate to escape the hoard of angry hadala-lafeda that want their matron back, but they are unable to find sanctuary among suspicious and vengeful people who know a medusae's reputation all too well.

Song of the Sea. A medusae and her entourage perform a famous play among her people, presented by manipulating the surface of the ocean in an elaborate display. Unfortunately, she has chosen to do so at the height of the local fishing season in one of the most lucrative areas of the ocean. Needless to say, the medusae will not cancel her performance just to "satisfy the petty greed of air-breathing barbarians."

TREASURE

A medusae's skin is a delicate membrane of magically resistant flesh which can be removed from a slain specimen provided her body is mostly intact. Doing so requires a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) check, or the skin is too damaged to be useful. If then treated to ensure longevity and durability, the skin can be fashioned into an iridescent robe with magical properties.

Mantle of the Medusae

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

While you wear this cloak, creatures cannot target you with spells or magical effects unless they have an Intelligence of 17 or higher.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN – RUNNING OUT OF BREATH

All the hadala-lafeda have abilities that affect the way characters breathe, so here is a review of edge cases that may occur when dealing with water, breathing, and drowning. These are interpretations based on a thorough review of the rules and the 2CGaming team's best judgment.

Being underwater imposes no restrictions on spellcasting, but if characters cast a spell with a verbal component, they immediately stop holding their breath. If that character can't breathe underwater, this could be a problem.

Characters reduced to 0 hit points (or paralyzed, stunned, or otherwise incapacitated) while holding their breath continue to "hold their breath" and can be healed magically and restored to consciousness as normal; they don't immediately begin to drown.

When characters can't breathe, whether that's due to an effect from a hadala-lafeda or because they have run out of time they can hold their breath, they remain conscious for a number of additional rounds equal to their Constitution modifier (minimum 1). A character can still speak and cast spells during this time, because there are no rule saying they can't. These are heroic adventurers who defy logic constantly, after all! After that number of rounds have elapsed, no matter what, at the start of the next turn, the character is reduced to 0 hit points and begins dying. These characters cannot regain hit points or be stabilized by any means until they can breathe again.

ECOLOGY

Each city of the hadala-lafeda has a single hadala-medusae which presides over the reproductive cycle of all lesser deep-sea fey. As fey, they do not mate traditionally, but rather the hadala-medusae lays eggs that hum with magical potential. Eggs given to hadala-lophi hatch as another lophi, and eggs given to hadala-levinoss hatch as levinoss. Each hadala-medusae is a unique being, and their origins are lost to time. The loss of one is devastating to the deep-sea fey and earns the killers the enmity of all hadala-lafeda. Medusae are refined and elegant, placing formality and respect above all other cultural customs. This makes the creatures snobbish to even the most out-of-touch noble. Surface-dwellers must work extra hard to earn a medusae's already hard-won respect, which is easily lost from the even the most minor errors in protocol.

HADALA-MEDUSAE

Large fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (coral armor)
Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)
Speed 0 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	27 (+8)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +14, Wis +9, Cha +9
Skills Arcana +20, Deception +15, History +20, Insight +15, Perception +9
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed
Senses darkvision 300 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Hadali, Sylvan
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Bioluminescence. The medusae emits a disorienting and sparkling light from its body. While emitting this light the medusae sheds dim light for 300 feet and creatures that can see the medusae have disadvantage on attack rolls against it. The medusae can choose to emit or suppress this light as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Deep Sea Dweller. The medusae is immune to the harmful effects of pressure at extreme depths and can breathe only underwater. Additionally, darkness of any kind (including magical darkness) does not impede a medusae's vision.

Hydro Shield. When the medusae rolls initiative, it can choose to raise a shield of swirling water around itself. The shield grants the medusae 150 temporary hit points. While the medusae has temporary hit points from the shield, it is immune to critical hits as well as the stunned and unconscious conditions, and it cannot be killed.

Superior Magic Resistance. If a hostile creature produces a spell or magical effect that affects the medusae, the creature producing the spell or magical effect must succeed on a DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check, or the medusae is immune to the effect for its duration.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The medusae takes its True Hydrokinesis action and one other action.

Curse of the Depths. A creature the medusae can see must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or become cursed. While cursed in this manner, the creature cannot breathe underwater by any means.

Tentacles. *Melee Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 36 (6d8 + 9) poison damage and the target must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 hour. A paralyzed creature can attempt a DC 22 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature that fails three saving throws attempted in this manner cannot attempt any additional saving throws until the effect ends.

True Hydrokinesis. With its thoughts, the medusae can manipulate water within 1 mile of it. When the medusae takes this action, each creature of the medusae's choice in the area must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or take 33 (6d10) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a success.

Additionally, when a creature fails the saving throw against this effect, the medusae can cause one of the following effects:

- The creature is restrained until the start of the medusae's next turn.
- The creature is moved up to 60 feet in a direction of the medusae's choice.
- If the creature is holding its breath, it reduces the amount of time it can hold its breath by 3 minutes.
- If the creature is suffocating, it fails a death saving throw.
- A creature not in contact with a body of water is immune to the effects of this action.

Watery Grave (Recharge 5–6). The medusae generates a massive current in a 500-foot radius centered on itself. Creatures and objects touching a body of water in that area must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or be pulled straight down to the bottom of the body of water (regardless of depth). A creature can choose to fail this saving throw and be drawn willingly into the depths.

Hammer Angels

Blending bureaucracy and brute force, hammer angels track the deeds of powerful mortals and tally every evil act, no matter how small. Should one under their watch stray too far from the path of righteousness, justice must be dispensed. It matters not how much good a person has done, nor do the hammer angels care if a minor act is what finally pushes someone over the line. If the sum of evil exceeds what angels consider acceptable, they descend to the material plane to balance the scales. From their high courts these celestials meticulously tally every mortal's transgressions, and their libraries overflow with personal files detailing all sins great and small.

Hammer angels never kill those who transgress when they can help it, for the dead cannot atone for their crimes. Instead, violators are subdued and brought to the upper planes for trial and rehabilitation. The exact details of this rehabilitation are unknown, but its effectiveness is proven by its nearly nonexistent recidivism rate. Former transgressors are never the same, with much of their personality stripped away by forces unknown. Powerful magic can undo this personality reshaping, but only at great cost. The hammer angels consider enduring the rehabilitation the sentence for the crimes, so they take no umbrage with those who restore the once-guilty. They continue to monitor these individuals for future transgressions.

FORTRESS DIVINE

While the fortress divine is the lowest ranking of the hammer angels, it is still considered a great honor among celestials to fill their roll. They are sincere almost beyond human imagining and have a deep love of art and beauty. It is not uncommon to find one shedding a single tear while looking at a sunrise, a work of art, or even the symmetry of an animal's face—all while standing over an unconscious evildoer, of course. With a glowing sword in one hand and a shield in the other, these angels lead vanguards of celestial forces on other planes. Their tactical skills in battle are exceptional, and they will gladly enlist other creatures that can aid in the tasks set before them. Their voices ring with bombastic confidence but take a harsh, authoritative tone when confronting transgressors.

TALIEN'S NOTES

It has been said by wittier philosophers than I that no one has better public relations than celestials. These extraplanar beings have branded themselves living incarnations of pure good, but their morality seldom aligns with our mortal interests. Take the bluntly named (and bluntly acting) hammer angels, for instance. These brutish bullies set a code of conduct for all living beings, don't disclose the details in any publicly accessible venue, and then quite literally beat violators into submission for failing to comply. Does that scream "pure good" to you? To me, it does not.

While I resent their methods and point to their many overreaching interventions on the undeserving, it is also undeniable that they have stopped a great number of mortals who were drunk on power and starved of common decency. Rather than wish them gone, perhaps we should include in our prayers that the hammer angels become more discerning.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a fortress divine with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

FORTRESS DIVINE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	Handpicked from the most regimented celestials, fortresses divine are the front line of the hammer angels, a group of obsessive guardians who keep tabs on powerful mortals. They count each evil deed—no matter how small—and once a threshold is reached, they travel to the material plane to bring their targets to justice.
21	A fortress divine emits an aura of angelic protection that guards nearby allies. Additionally, the fortress divine can interpose itself in front of its allies, taking attacks that were meant for them. They are also capable of generating a short-lived ward that can completely negate a single attack.
25	Fortresses divine must be close to their allies to use their abilities to full effect. They have powerful melee attacks and are surprisingly mobile, capable of charging attackers who take aim at nearby allies. They are well defended against physical attacks and capable of avoiding most magical effects, but they lack agility and are easily struck by spells most would be able to dodge.

TACTICS

Fortresses divine need allies to be fully effective. They pair well with a group of melee creatures so the fortress divine can stay close to them and use its own melee attacks to stun and knock characters prone. You can also add a fortress divine to a group of ranged attackers or spellcasters to make them much sturdier.

Priority one is to stay within 10 feet of as many allies as possible. Dealing damage is secondary, but try to make all four of the fortress's attacks against a single target. Make use of Interposing Assault when you can, and occasionally have the fortress divine charge away from its allies,



HAMMER ANGELS

leaving them exposed. Players trying to figure out how to lure it away so they can attack its more fragile allies is exactly the kind of creative tactics you want to encourage! Save Reactive Bulwark for something with a big area of effect, like *fireball* or another spell. Failing that, you can use it to stop a critical hit (especially one that is also a rogue's Sneak Attack or a paladin's Divine Smite).

Easier Tactics – Use the Longsword attacks first, then use Pommel Strike and Shield Bash on a different target. Spread damage around, and don't use Interposing Assault every round. You can just not use Reactive Bulwark or Interposing Assault, and make sure to keep the fortress a decent distance away from at least half of its allies at any given time.

Harder Tactics – When attacking with the fortress divine, always use Pommel Strike first, then Shield Bash, then make the two Longsword attacks. If either of the first two attacks stun or knock the creature prone, the follow-up attacks have advantage. If you stun a character with Pommel Strike, consider using Shield Bash on another target to spread the debilitating conditions around.

The Fortress Divine

Now here is a celestial with whom I can connect. For all their claims to emulate the highest virtues of the mortal heart, I often despaired over the lack of artistry among them. No longer. Fortresses divine have aesthetic sensibilities that rival my own immaculately refined tastes. Seldom have I had such satisfying conversation about the great artists of this and older ages, and when I offered to perform for a trio of them, they produced instruments of their own and suggested we play as a quartet. Of course, they were there to bludgeon me unconscious because I had an overdue book from the College of Lore's library, but their willingness to indulge in a bit of music before battle gave me hope for mortal–celestial relations. It also gave me time to weave a *banishment* spell into the performance and cast them back to the upper planes, but that's a story for another day.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Soldier

Favors: Dexterity (Targeting), Range, Sorcerers, Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Paladins, Rogues, Single-Target

Keep one ally within 10 feet at all times, especially one that goes shortly after the fortress divine in initiative order. If that ally is attacked, the fortress divine can use Interposing Assault to charge the attacker with its fly speed, moving up to 60 feet, and then the ally takes its turn soon to close the distance and stay in the aura provided by Tower of Might. Save Reactive Bulwark for a large area-of-effect spell—it's great for neutralizing spells like *chain lightning* or taking some of the punch out of *meteor swarm*.

PLOT HOOKS

Way of Peace. The party finds a fortress divine sitting in quiet contemplation. It has discovered a crystal of honey so perfectly formed that it can't continue its life of violence. The angel was on the hunt for someone but finds itself no longer able to walk that path. Perhaps the characters can finish the job?

On the Run. A mysterious knight is the newest rising star in the jousting circuit, and not even a direct hit can unseat her from her horse. She is, of course, a fallen fortress divine in disguise, seeking a life outside the strict terms under which she once served.

Career Change. A deceased friend (or enemy) of the party finds his soul among those worthy of becoming a celestial. Returning as a fortress divine, they must now cross paths (and blades) with a mutual acquaintance. It's up to the characters to either join in their former friend's quest or oppose the unfair and uncompromising nature of the fortress divine.

TREASURE

When a fortress divine is slain and its essence is unable to return to its home plane, its body and equipment petrify into a marble statue of supreme quality. Such statues are worth 15,000 gp to collectors. Fiends also prize these sculptures, not for aesthetics but for the chance to defile the remains of celestial beings. To such creatures these statues are worth far more, though such dealings are always fraught with peril.

ECOLOGY

When an angel achieves the rank of fortress divine, it already knows everything it needs to fulfill its new obligations. Without an adjustment or training period and no serious responsibilities, they have a great deal of time to pass while waiting for orders to dispense justice. Most spend this time in quiet contemplation of things of great beauty like sculptures, paintings, and music. Some choose to practice artistry themselves, but they are never satisfied with their work, for the gap between their tastes and their abilities is large. They are immensely patient and are always willing to grant last requests to their targets (though this gets them into trouble more often than not).

MAUL ANGELIC

For when the tactical expertise of the fortress divine is not enough, the maul angelic take up their hammers with an unsettling enthusiasm. Mid-ranking hammer angels, mauls angelic are geared to tackle spellcasters. They take joy in their work, shouting with triumph every time their holy hammers strike true. Celestials that ascend to the rank of maul angelic are accomplished justiciars drawn from the lower ranks, rewarded for their unwavering commitment to law and jurisprudence. They veer dangerously close to the sin of pride, tackling tasks and challenges that are almost too much for them to handle, and they suffer the most casualties of any kind of hammer angel. Maul angelic are always robust, proudly displaying their flawless bodies and respectable muscles. Each carries a massive runic maul that stamps its victims with a holy symbol carved into the weapon's head.

The Maul Angelic

I am unsure of what to make of the mauls angelic. They are the most human of the hammer angels, and for once I mean that as a good thing. Unlike their comrades both above and below them in the hierarchy, mauls angelic possess the capacity for joy and even have a sense of humor. Have you ever seen an angel laugh when a drunkard trips over his own barstool? It's... unsettling. In that case, the maul angelic immediately helped the poor man to his feet but didn't stop laughing for almost ten minutes. In fact, physical comedy seems to be their favorite genre. I'm sorry to say they have no appreciation for the finer arts, and my flute partita did not impress.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute
Favors: Barbarians, Fighters, Rangers, Strength (High)
Foils: Bards, Clerics, Rogues, Spells (With Duration), Stealth

FORTRESS DIVINE

Large celestial, lawful good

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)
Hit Points 171 (18d8 + 90)
Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +9, Int +7, Wis +7, Cha +8
Skills Insight +11, Perception +7, Persuasion +8
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages all
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Angel of Justice. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points by the attacks of a fortress divine are knocked unconscious and stabilized rather than killed. As a 1-minute ritual, the fortress divine can cast *plane shift*. This ability can only affect the fortress divine and one other creature. An unwilling creature can attempt a DC 16 Charisma saving throw to resist the spell. Unconscious creatures automatically fail this saving throw.

Holy Weapon. The fortress's longsword is magical, and it has a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls it makes with its longsword.

Tower of Might. The fortress divine projects an aura within 10 feet of it. The fortress divine and all creatures friendly to it in the area gain the following benefits. The fortress must be conscious to grant these benefits, and a creature cannot benefit from this feature more than once at a time:

- Advantage on saving throws
- +2 bonus to AC
- If a creature would be pushed or moved by an effect, it can choose to be immune to the effect.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fortress divine makes two Longsword attacks, a Pommel Strike attack, and a Shield Bash attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d8 + 7) magical slashing damage.

Pommel Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or become stunned until the end of its next turn.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target must attempt a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

REACTIONS

Interposing Assault. As a reaction when a creature within 10 feet of the fortress divine is attacked, the fortress divine moves up to its speed toward either the attacker or the attacked creature. If the fortress divine ends this movement within 5 feet of the attacker or the attacked creature, it becomes the target of the attack instead and can make one Pommel Strike or Shield Bash attack against the attacking creature.

Reactive Bulwark (1/Day). As a reaction when an allied creature within 10 feet of the fortress divine would take damage, the fortress divine and all allied creatures within 10 feet of it gain immunity to a damage type of the fortress's choice until the end of that turn.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a maul angelic with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

MAUL ANGELIC LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	A maul angelic is a member of the hammer angels, a group of militant celestials determined to track the evil deeds of every powerful mortal. Should that mortal do too many evil acts, no matter how much good they have done, a maul angelic descends to pummel the guilty into unconsciousness and abduct its victim for rehabilitation.
21	Mauls angelic are wreathed in a mantle that shrugs off lesser spells and has a chance to dispel even more powerful magics. They possess immense strength—strikes from their hammers are capable of flinging creatures more than twice their size a considerable distance.
25	Though physically powerful, mauls angelic are somewhat weak willed and vulnerable to effects that prey on their lack of mental fortitude. They also have few protections against physical harm, and their lack of situational awareness makes them easy to lead into an ambush.

TACTICS

In combat, a maul angelic must get into melee range as soon as possible. Its 10-foot reach and flying speed of 100 feet make that relatively easy, allowing it to quickly close in on the evildoer it has chosen as its target. Once in range, it uses Awesome Blow to catapult the target far away from its friends (or into a nearby obstacle if there's not enough room to split the party). The maul angelic can then follow up with whatever remains of its movement to close the distance to the recently launched character. On subsequent turns it uses its Maul attack until Awesome Blow recharges. Use Angelic Alacrity against effects that would incapacitate, paralyze, or stun the angel. The maul angelic has no fear of taking damage, but if it can't take actions it can't dispense justice, and that's a problem.

When designing an encounter around mauls angelic, you can pair two of them against high-level parties or ally them with lesser celestials. Mauls angelic never accept help from non-celestials. Their tactics complement ranged attackers and disabling spellcasters who can make targets easy prey for their devastating attacks.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Awesome Blow every time it's available—have the maul angelic save it for dramatic moments, using it no more than twice in a fight. Likewise, don't make optimal use of Angelic Alacrity. You can play up the angel's pride as it thinks it can withstand a magical effect without calling on that ability. Beyond that, spread damage out among multiple targets and don't follow up on targets that are knocked prone. Give them room to stand up and recover.

Harder Tactics – A fun trick you can do with the Incredible Blows ability (assuming the maul angelic has at least 30 feet of movement available) is to hit a character and push it straight upward. Then have the maul angelic fly 30 feet up and make its second attack, pushing the character upward again for a lot of bonus falling damage. In an enclosed space a target is battered against the ceiling a couple of times for a hilarious—if not slightly gruesome—scene. You should also try to hit other characters as often as possible to knock them prone, opening them up to a second attack or attacks from other monsters.

PLOT HOOKS

Workplace Dispute. A trio of mauls angelic are trying to resolve a dispute over an unconscious hero. Each one claims they have the proper contract for the hero's rehabilitation. For comedic effect, they may be engaged in slapstick arguments like the Three Stooges.

Evil Twin. In a case of mistaken identity, a maul angelic attacks one member of the party. It turns out that party member either has an identical twin or a shapeshifter impersonating the character (or some other common identifier) and the maul angelic was after a truly vile person. Will the party step up and take over the contract?

Making Gains. A maul angelic confronts the party, hoping to test its strength against the most virtuous among them. This can take the form of a contest of physical prowess, but it might also be a challenge to bake the most pies for the peasants, deliver the most gifts on a major holiday, or find homes for the most orphans, something that qualifies as "classic fairytale goodness."

TREASURE

When a maul angelic is slain, its body and equipment dissolve into radiant light which coagulates into a substance called *coelumide* (*kway-loom-ide*), meaning "heavenly liquid" in an ancient tongue. One maul angelic provides 1 pound of *coelumide* which can be used as detailed in the sidebar of the same name.

Coelumide

Coelumide is raw heavenly energy in liquid form, and it has several uses. One pound of *coelumide* can be sold for 3,000 gp. As part of casting a spell that deals radiant damage, the caster can consume 1 pound of *coelumide* to deal the maximum possible radiant damage with the spell. If the spell deals damage multiple times over its duration, only the first instance is maximized. *Coelumide* can also be imbibed, though the process is unpleasant. Drinking 1 pound allows a creature to regain all expended uses of its Channel Divinity feature, if it possesses one. While it has no other benefits, the drinker does feel wholesome for next 24 hours.

ECOLOGY

Though they have no need to do so, mauls angelic spend most of their time in physical training. Their celestial bodies neither grow stronger nor atrophy, but they find the act of training to be enjoyable, and it's an excuse to avoid the excessive paperwork now expected of them after ascending from the lower ranks. They are happy to hold casual conversation while training, as it implies the strenuous training is actually effortless. Of the hammer angels, mauls angelic are the most personable and open to negotiation and bargaining. Fond of celebrating, hammer angels create thunderous music by beating their hammers against various objects in synchronous rhythm. Such performances are deafening to most creatures, who wisely enjoy such concerts from a safe distance.

CHAMPION FIST

The greatest of the hammer angels, the champion fist are stalwart angels who beat transgressors into submission with their bare hands. They are all but impossible to keep from their quarry, with incredible mobility in spite of their great size and powerful build. Champion fist are only dispatched when the mightiest mortals commit foul deeds, and the appearance of even one means a mighty battle will soon take place. The bodies of these celestials are impossibly proportioned, bulging with layers of bronzed muscle as hard as steel. Their wingspan is massive to accommodate the weight of all that bulk, a feat made easier by the modest wardrobe consisting only of a gauntlet and a skirt. Champion fist act with efficient strength. They do not fidget or move without purpose, and they are the very picture of stoicism when not punching the face off transgressors. In the rare instance a champion fist must speak, its voice is surprisingly soft and gentle.

The Champion Fist

As their name so eloquently implies, the champion fist are unparalleled pugilists. Relying on only their great strength, sleek wings, and an enchanted gauntlet I've not yet been able to acquire, they are capable of putting even the stoutest brute down for the count. Through a mysterious mechanism, they can exert magical energies that, in a similar manner to holding a spell in place, force their victims to remain unconscious until the angel decides otherwise.

I once summoned a champion fist, and—most unusually—its chief complaint was that time spent in my binding spell was time it could not spend tallying the evil deeds of mortals. It felt no vexation toward my removal of its freedoms, only anger at its inability to do its duty. I must remember this as potential leverage should I offend them by stepping on a ladybug.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Skirmisher
Favors: Barbarians, Constitution (High), Rogues, Sorcerers, Stealth
Foils: Bards, Clerics, Disabling, Invisibility, Wizards

MAUL ANGELIC

Large celestial, lawful good

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 152 (16d10 + 64)
Speed 40 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +11, Dex +8, Con +8, Cha +9
Skills Athletics +11, Insight +13, Intimidation +9, Perception +13
Damage Resistances necrotic, poison, radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages all
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

TRAITS

Angel of Justice. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points by the attacks of a maul angelic are knocked unconscious and stabilized rather than killed. As a 1-minute ritual, the maul angelic can cast *plane shift*. This ability can only affect the maul angelic and one other creature. An unwilling creature can attempt a DC 17 Charisma saving throw to resist the spell. Unconscious creatures automatically fail this saving throw.

Angelic Mantle. At the beginning of each of its turns, any 3rd-level or lower spell affecting the maul angelic ends. For each spell of 4th level or higher affecting it, the maul angelic may attempt a Charisma ability check (+4) against a DC of 10 + the spell's level. On a successful check, the spell ends.

Incredible Blows. A creature hit by an attack by the maul angelic must attempt a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be thrown 30 feet in a direction the maul angelic chooses (including up). Creatures encountering an object or creature stop moving and take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet of movement prevented. If its movement was prevented by a creature, that creature must attempt a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (its choice) or take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage per 10 feet of movement prevented and fall prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The maul angelic makes two Maul attacks.

Awesome Blow (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) magical bludgeoning damage and 36 (8d8) radiant damage. A creature thrown via the maul's Incredible Blows feature by this attack is thrown an additional 70 feet.

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) magical bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, its body is stamped with a magical brand that lasts for 48 hours. While so stamped, a creature cannot be hidden from the maul angelic, and the maul always knows the direction and fastest route to the creature.

REACTIONS

Angelic Alacrity. As a reaction when the maul angelic would attempt a saving throw, it gains advantage on that saving throw.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a champion fist with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

CHAMPION FIST LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Champion fist are called down from the upper planes to dispense justice, targeting mortals who have committed many evil acts. They knock their victims unconscious and carry them back to the upper planes for rehabilitation.
23	One hit from a champion fist can knock even a mighty warrior unconscious. They are impossible to pin down, shrugging off even magical immobilization. They also possess truesight, rendering invisibility and illusions useless against them.
27	While they are well protected against debilitating conditions, champion fist have little in the way of resistance to damage. Elemental spells and magical force effects are quite effective against them. They have some capacity to shrug off effects to which they would normally succumb but cannot do so in rapid succession.

TACTICS

Champion fist are simple, powerful creatures. They exclusively attack whichever character commits enough evil to attract the attention of a hammer angel. If it can't reach its target by simply moving, or if it would take more than one opportunity attack to do so, a champion fist uses Pristine Positioning to close the distance safely. Otherwise, it uses Flurry of Blows every time it is available and Angelic Reach when it is not. It also uses Angelic Reach (or not) as appropriate to most effectively deal with characters who are resistant to bludgeoning or radiant damage.

When building encounters with a champion fist, you should only use one of them. You can pair it with lesser hammer angels from this group or with other celestials, and it benefits greatly from ranged backup to complement its towering presence in melee. Champion fist are not so proud that they refuse help from non-celestials and may be found in the company of virtuous humanoids or other lawful-aligned creatures. Any creatures that can impose disadvantage on saving throws have powerful synergy with the champion fist's Slam attack.

Easier Tactics – Don't focus exclusively on the target of the champion fist's ire, instead spreading damage around. When the champion fist attacks, use both Slam attacks on a given turn against the same character. You're more likely to knock that one character out, but attacking different targets opens up the possibility that you'll disable two party members at once, which is much worse.

Harder Tactics – Hit-and-run attacks with Pristine Positioning are devastating. If the hammer angel can close to melee range with its target, make its two attacks, and then use Pristine Positioning, it can spend its entire remaining flying movement to escape. If it can get out of range and line of sight with 120 feet of movement or less, on its next turn it can use Pristine Positioning again to move 120 feet into melee, attack, and then retreat. While this tactic prevents it from using Flurry of Blows, reducing its damage output slightly, it massively increases the champion fist's survivability by forcing the party to rely on readied actions. Characters with the Sentinel feat counter this tactic completely, so you should either utilize it as a possible opportunity to make a player feel successful or avoid using it altogether.

PLOT HOOKS

Unusual Service. A near-saintly member of a religious order is in the middle of a sermon when a champion fist appears and beats the cleric unconscious. No words are exchanged as the champion fist begins its ritual to return to the upper planes with its target in tow.

Sanctuary. A champion fist appears before the party, but not to fight. It wishes to defect from the hammer angels and is seeking asylum from its fellow celestials.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place. One party member is targeted by a champion fist. When the celestial appears to enact justice, a second champion fist arrives and claims the first one is about to commit an unacceptably evil act and must be stopped.

TREASURE

When a champion fist is slain outside of the upper planes, it vanishes in a flash of light along with all of its equipment and reforms on its native plane. If slain there, it is destroyed, leaving behind a golden, magical gauntlet. Called *safeguards*, these gauntlets are powerful magical items that offer great protection against magic and other hazards.

Safeguard

Wondrous item (very rare), requires attunement

A *safeguard* is a golden gauntlet forged in the upper planes. Once you attune to it, it magically resizes to fit perfectly. It emits dim light in a radius of 5 feet, and while wearing the gauntlet, your unarmed strikes are magical and deal radiant damage instead of bludgeoning damage. The gauntlet has 3 charges. While wearing this gauntlet, when you fail a saving throw you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge to succeed instead. The gauntlet regains 1d4 - 1 expended charges at dawn.

ECOLOGY

Champion fist are at the highest echelon of the hammer angels, and that means they have the most responsibility. Taking on more obligations is seen as more virtuous by celestials, so champion fist are always tallying more mortal deeds than they can handle. They react poorly to summons, interruptions, or anything else that gets between them and their work. Every one of them is as direct and uncomplicated in social situations as they are in battle, and they don't mince words. In the rare instance champion fist don't have work to do, they display a sensitive side typically kept private. They pour their emotions in eloquent writings, creating poetry, theater, and fiction of astonishing quality.

CHAMPION FIST

Large celestial, lawful good

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 195 (18d10 + 96)
Speed 60 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con+12, Wis +10, Cha +11
Skills Insight +10, Survival +10
Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, restrained
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Angel of Justice. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points by the attacks of the champion fist are knocked unconscious and stabilized rather than killed. As a 1-minute ritual, the champion fist can cast *plane shift*. This ability can only affect the champion fist and one other creature. An unwilling creature can attempt a DC 19 Charisma saving throw to resist the spell. Unconscious creatures automatically fail this saving throw.

Angelic Reach. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the champion fist increases the reach of its Slam attack to 15 feet. Damage dealt by these attacks is radiant instead of bludgeoning.

Flurry of Blows (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action on each of its turns, the champion fist can make a Slam attack.

Impediment Immune. The champion fist is immune to difficult terrain, and its speed cannot be reduced by any means.

Pristine Positioning. As a bonus action, the champion fist can take both the Dash and Disengage actions.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The champion fist makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (3d10 + 8) magical bludgeoning damage, and the creature must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn. If the creature fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is instead knocked unconscious until the end of its next turn. The champion fist can choose to concentrate on this effect as though concentrating on a spell. While concentrating on this effect, the condition instead ends when the champion fist's concentration ends or when the champion fist chooses to end the effect.

REACTIONS

Warding Gauntlet. As a reaction when the champion fist would fail a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Imperial Dragons

Leaders and champions of dragonkind, imperial dragons are uncontested paragons of draconic virtue and strength. These dragons are supremely powerful with an ego to match, living up to their names with a commanding nature and considerable fighting ability. Treasure and lairs mean nothing to an imperial dragon. Instead, they take an extremely proactive and visible approach to life, soaring across the world in search of new challenges.

An imperial dragon's battle-scarred body is armored in layers of steel-grey scales, while its head is mantled with elegant, black-tipped horns. All imperial dragons demonstrate exceptional physical prowess, their bodies honed to muscular perfection. The noble countenance of an imperial dragon is matched only by its magnificence—even at a distance an imperial dragon appears statuesque and regal. They carry themselves proudly and openly, earning them the moniker "dragon knights" and other honorary titles from lesser creatures. From tip to tail, these dragons fashion themselves into living weapons: razor-sharp claws, scales polished to a mirror shine, and their teeth serrated like saw blades.

One in every hundred true dragon eggs hatches into an imperial dragon, regardless of its parents' species. Those lucky enough to survive their wrathful parents venture into a world full of danger and enemies to fight. A newborn imperial dragon quickly develops its body for maximum lethality. As they age, a dragon's body becomes brutally scarred by battle. Imperial dragons see these as trophies or badges of honor and are willing to endure grievous injuries to elevate their status.

TALIEN'S NOTES: THE LEGEND OF THE DRAGON SOVEREIGN

The imperial dragon race shares a collective aspiration and goal. Believing themselves superior to other dragons and extremely superior to non-dragons, imperial dragons seek to unite all dragons as rulers of all lesser beings. To them, it is natural and evident that the world should be ordered, for a dragon can become one of the most powerful beings in existence by simply growing old. I have learned of an ancient prophecy foretelling the coming of the Dragon Sovereign, a dragon with power radical enough to unite all of dragonkind and assume dominion over our world. All imperial dragons believe in this prophecy with a frightening zeal, each seeking to become the Dragon Sovereign, which explains the almost psychotic obsession they have with violence. Thankfully, no official Dragon Sovereign has been declared, but dragons with whom I have spoken reverently utter the name "Ultraxus" and refuse to elaborate further.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about imperial dragons with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (History) check.

IMPERIAL DRAGON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Imperial dragons are a rare breed of dragon that love to fight. They view combat as essential to life as breathing and eating, and they respect strength and prowess.
21	To avoid combat with an imperial dragon, it is best to appear as weak and helpless as possible. Displays of power and strength will likely provoke the dragon into attacking just for the fun of it.
26	Imperial dragons train their bodies to physical perfection. They are far stronger than ordinary dragons—all of their abilities are exclusively tailored to combat. They have no weaknesses, know no fear, and unleash disintegrating beams of force from their jaws.

TREASURE

Unlike other dragons, imperial dragons do not hoard treasure. What currency they acquire on their adventures is swiftly spent on making themselves more dangerous, and an imperial dragon never pays for what

Keeled Scales. An imperial dragon's scales can be added to a suit of medium or heavy armor to increase its defensive properties. Doing so requires 36 hours of strenuous activity and proficiency in leatherworker's tools. Armors with more surface area require larger numbers of scales which must be undamaged and carefully removed, typically requiring a DC 23 Wisdom (Survival) ability check. Armor augmented by imperial dragon scales in this manner gains the following benefit.

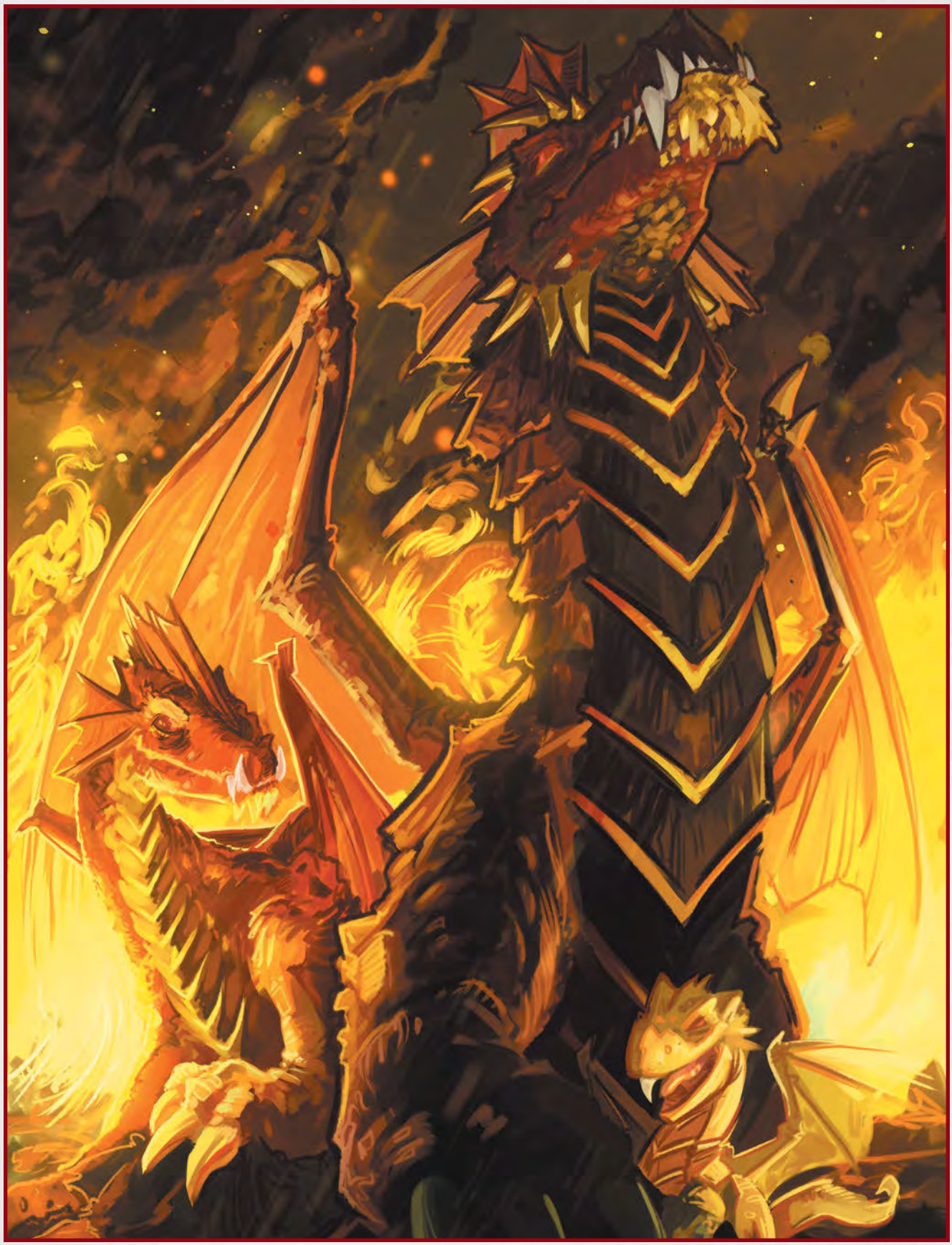
While you are wearing this armor, you have resistance to force damage. Additionally, you reduce the damage taken by weapon attacks by 5 if the armor is medium armor or 10 if the armor is heavy armor.

Imperial Dragon Fang

Weapon (dagger or longsword), legendary (requires attunement)

This blade is fashioned from the serrated fang of an imperial dragon, alchemically treated to retain the magical properties inherent to its source.

When you hit with an attack using this blade, the target takes an extra 2d6 force damage. Additionally, when you hit a creature with this blade, you may grapple your target (no action required) with the blade's serrated edge. While grappling a creature in this manner, you cannot attack a different target with the blade.



it could take anyway (which is most things). However, imperial dragon body parts are extremely valuable when harvested and can be used to make equipment or used as spell components. The larger the dragon, the more material can be harvested from its body. Forging equipment from imperial dragon body parts requires considerable time, materials, and skill possessed by only the most experienced of artisans.

ECOLOGY

Imperial dragons are nomads and adventurers, remarkably busy for their kind. They can be found anywhere provided something interesting piques their curiosity. This something usually takes the form of a dangerous creature that promises a good fight. Anything with a reputation for power and skill in battle will inevitably draw an imperial dragon looking for a challenge. Evil imperial dragons will devastate the lands they visit in titanic conflicts, while neutral and good dragons will give a bit more consideration toward the impact their presence has on the world. When given the choice, imperial dragons prefer spacious areas that allow them to exercise and practice without being disturbed. This makes them remarkably easy to find (simply follow the sound of a dragon battling), but few want to risk approaching these fearsome creatures, lest they be considered worthy foes.

Younger dragons need not travel far to find those worthy foes. The older an imperial dragon gets, the harder it becomes to find things worth killing. This makes the oldest among them wayfarers and explorers of the finest caliber, adept at tracking and adventuring to rival the most grizzled rangers.

The Imperial Dragon Wyrmling

I am astounded as to how these tenacious dragons can hatch from any true dragon species. It would be like if a gnome gave birth to an orc! After encountering an infant imperial dragon, I have nothing but sympathy for the parents. Its violent habits and obstinate nature would certainly make it the "problem child" in any family unit. When you are dealing with dragons, this extreme nature gets magnified tenfold. I doubt even the most savage red or overbearing gold could keep a handle on these wyrmlings, a thought that is equal parts entertaining and terrifying.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Range, Rangers, Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Melee, Paladins, Spellcasters, Spells (Damaging), Weapons (Non-Magical)

IMPERIAL DRAGON WYRMLING

While far mightier than wyrmlings of other dragons, infant imperial dragons know they are at their weakest. Cunning and elusive, these dragons shrewdly assess every creature they come across as a potential threat. Eager to prove themselves, wyrmlings are quick to set out on their own and attack anything they think will give them a good fight. However, they are anything but reckless. There is little imperial wyrmlings won't do to increase their own fighting potential and combat experience, often to the detriment of those living nearby.

TACTICS

Imperial dragon wyrmlings are cautious foes with a healthy fear of defeat. To fall at such a young age is a shameful death for an imperial dragon, so wyrmlings never pick a fight they are unlikely to win. These dragons use their impressive speed to stay away from dangerous opponents and harry vulnerable enemies. Their small (for a dragon) size allows them to make good use of cover as they dart about the battlefield. A wyrmling will gladly provoke an attack of opportunity if it means it will avoid staying close to melee foes for an entire round. The wyrmling's most dangerous ability is its breath, which it lines up for maximum effect using its high mobility. Only when the dragon is assured of victory will it dedicate itself to frontal assault.

Use the dragon's Breath Weapons as often as possible—its damage is more than enough to stagger the "tankiest" of characters. With its high speed, the dragon can grapple exposed characters with its Bite and drag them into cover in the same turn. From there the dragon can attack with impunity, with only the strongest characters able to escape its grasp. The dragon should never be caught out in the open unless it has made a grievous tactical error.

Easier Tactics – The wyrmling should not have a tactical understanding of its opponents. It will attack enemies with high AC, use its Breath Weapons against creatures with high Dexterity, and be fearless in the face of high-damage enemies. Its draconic arrogance should be at the heart of this strategy, assured in the belief that it cannot lose against pitiful, lesser creatures.

Harder Tactics – The wyrmling can outfly almost anything and should prove it. It has more than enough speed to move, act, then get behind cover all in the same turn. If the dragon can take the time to recharge its Breath Weapons between hit-and-run attacks, it will gladly do so. The dragon has the movement to line up multiple creatures for its Breath Weapons and should stay out of reach in the meantime.

PLOT HOOKS

Too Much Fun. The local wildlife is being devastated by a powerful creature that appears to kill for the thrill of it. An infant imperial dragon is responsible, seeing these massacres as necessary training for future battles against more serious enemies.

IMPERIAL DRAGON WYRMLING

Large dragon, any lawful alignment

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 168 (16d10 + 80)
Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +5, Con +8, Wis +6
Skills Athletics +11, Insight +6, Intimidation +7, Perception +6, Survival +9
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities force
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

TRAITS

Heavy Armor. The dragon reduces damage it takes from weapon attacks by 5.

Improved Critical. The dragon's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a 19 or 20.

Spell Resistance. The dragon takes half damage from spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes two attacks: one with its Bite or Tail, and one with its Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) force damage. If the target is a creature, the dragon may grapple it (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the dragon may not bite another target.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons:

- **Antimagic Bomb.** The dragon spits a globule of antimagic at a point within 30 feet which explodes in a 15-foot radius centered on that point. Each spell or magical effect in the area is dispelled as if affected by a *dispel magic* spell (+2 to dispel spells of 4th level or higher).
- **Force Breath.** The dragon exhales pure disintegrating force in a 60-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Everything in that line must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) force damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this damage is disintegrated. Objects and structures in the area not being worn or carried take double damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., each target of the dragon's choice within range. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. A creature hit by this attack must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Face Off. A wyrmling imperial dragon is holding a town hostage, demanding they bring it heroes to face in battle. For every week the dragon must wait, it attacks the strongest-looking person in the town, which unfortunately pits the creature against blacksmiths and butchers rather than anyone capable of posing a legitimate challenge.

A Little Help Please? A young red dragon is offering the entire contents of its hoard to anyone willing to defend it against an overenthusiastic imperial dragon looking to make a name for itself.

YOUNG IMPERIAL DRAGON

Even young imperial dragons are brutally dangerous specimens. The benefits of their vigorous lifestyle are already apparent as these dragons tackle dangerous foes head on, sweeping aside lesser creatures with disdain. At this age an imperial dragon has mastered dozens of deadly techniques and strategies, with a perfect understanding of its own capabilities. Young imperial dragons have accumulated vast knowledge of all manner of creatures. Odds are good that if one were to ask a young dragon about race or species, it could tell it you its exact strengths, weaknesses, preferred battle tactics, favorite food, how they taste, and, of course, how many the dragon has killed.

The Young Imperial Dragon

When Haloa pointed out a young imperial dragon to me, I thought he was making a joke in poor taste. Then I remembered who I was talking to. Like a good ranger should, he had collected a wealth of information on the one he was stalking. My hopes that this specimen was a freak of nature relative to other imperial dragons were quickly dashed. These creatures are massive for their age, adding to their already intimidating appearance. Violence dominates every aspect of their lives. Where normally I would seek out ecological data to better understand and avoid conflict with powerful creatures, I can only conclude that acquiring tactical information on how to slay one should be my primary focus.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher
Favors: Range, Rangers, Warlocks, Wizards
Foils: Barbarians, Melee, Paladins, Spellcasters, Spells (Damaging), Weapons (Non-Magical)

TACTICS

Young imperial dragons have wisdom and experience well beyond their years, even for dragons. They are insatiably curious about anything they have not encountered before, and in battle they treat a lack of information

about enemies as a crippling weakness. However, once an imperial dragon is confident it understands an enemy, it unleashes overwhelming force. They are efficient, joyful killers, enjoying the thrill of battle to an almost psychotic degree. A young imperial dragon doing too well in a fight may even give its foes time to recover and regroup, just to make things more interesting.

Hold the dragon's Breath Weapons until it can take a good shot, whether that involves dispelling a lot of magical effects or disintegrating a weakened hero. Use the dragon's Tail attack to knock foes prone before attacking with advantage. The dragon can also fly grappled targets into the air and drop them for significant damage, which when followed by Force Breath can annihilate a character in a single turn.

Easier Tactics – The dragon is more interested in having fun than massacring its foes. It will focus on spectacular displays of its strength and skill and be fascinated by the tactics and strategies employed against it. Unless gravely injured, the dragon will avoid killing enemies or making things too easy, ensuring it has more time to "play" and learn from the experience.

Have the dragon remain on the ground unless it's going after flying enemies. Only use its Force Breath against high-health targets to avoid disintegrating characters outright. If things get dicey, the dragon can take the Dash action to outrun its foes rather than stay and fight.

Harder Tactics – The dragon views its enemies as dire threats or boring weaklings with nothing new to offer. It will systematically eliminate foes one by one, starting with the most vulnerable and moving its way up the ladder. Tactically brilliant, the imperial dragon should always have an effective plan, employing terrain and magic to devastating effect. Enemies that severely injure the dragon are afforded an honorable death.

The dragon will swoop in to bite and grapple enemies before soaring back into the sky. It will then remain out of reach while it tears the unfortunate victim apart. The dragon will often take the Ready action to hold its breath weapon, waiting for its enemies to line up for the perfect shot as they rush to aid a downed ally.

PLOT HOOKS

A One-Sided Affair. A young imperial dragon enters a local gladiatorial tournament, to the shock and horror of the entire nation. Too scared to stop it from competing, the officials have no choice but to watch the dragon tear apart every gladiator in what was supposed to be a nonlethal event.

Today, You Are Prey. The characters are stalked by a young imperial dragon which is learning all it can about their strategies and abilities. It is only a matter of time before the dragon attacks, its advantage against the party growing with each day it observes them.

Do You Even Know What That Is? An imperial dragon is trying out the whole "dragon and treasure" thing by amassing a hoard of exquisite weaponry. Among its collection is a famous artifact which draws heroes across the land to reclaim it, much to the dragon's delight.

YOUNG IMPERIAL DRAGON

Huge dragon, any lawful alignment

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 237 (19d12 + 114)
Speed 50 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +13, Dex +7, Con +11, Wis +9
Skills Athletics +18, Insight +9, Intimidation +10, Perception +9, Survival +9
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities force
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

TRAITS

Heavy Armor. The dragon reduces damage it takes from weapon attacks by 5.

Improved Critical. The dragon's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a 19 or 20.

Spell Resistance. The dragon takes half damage from spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its Bite or Tail, and two with its Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d12 + 8) piercing damage and 14 (4d6) force damage. If the target is a creature, the dragon may grapple it (escape DC 21). Until this grapple ends, the dragon may not bite another target.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons:

- **Antimagic Bomb.** The dragon spits a globule of antimagic at a point within 60 feet which explodes in a 20-foot radius centered on that point. Each spell or magical effect in the area is dispelled as if affected by a *dispel magic* spell (+5 to dispel spells of 5th level or higher).
- **Force Breath.** The dragon exhales pure disintegrating force in a 120-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Everything in that line must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 77 (14d10) force damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this damage is disintegrated. Objects and structures in the area not being worn or carried take double damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., each target of the dragon's choice within range. *Hit:* 13 (1d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage. A creature hit by this attack must succeed on a DC 21 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

ADULT IMPERIAL DRAGON

Adult imperial dragons are so large and fearsome they are often mistaken for ancient dragons of other species. This misconception is well deserved, for to survive to adulthood an imperial dragon will have slain hundreds of worthy foes. These dragons have an overwhelming arrogance, flat out refusing to fight creatures that they believe are beneath them (which is most things) based solely on their perceived strength. Only the extraordinarily powerful or tasty have cause to fear an adult imperial dragon—other creatures are scared off or avoided. If one is able to get over their justifiable arrogance, adult imperial dragons can be steadfast allies to those who aid it, provided its helpful "pets" do not become strong enough to be worth killing.

TACTICS

Conflict with an adult imperial dragon is overwhelmingly dangerous. Only the legendarily insane or foolhardy is assured of victory against such a dragon, a notion swiftly dispelled after battle is joined. With worthy foes few and far between, an adult imperial dragon is thrilled and jubilant in a battle. It relishes the pain of its injuries and the devastation it inflicts with a youthful enthusiasm. Adults give as good as they get: the harder they are hit, the harder they hit back. The dragon will scatter enemies about the battlefield, keeping them isolated and disorganized while it delivers overwhelming damage with lethal precision.

The Adult Imperial Dragon

By the gods, what an absolute beast of a dragon. The one I had been tracking had left a trail of unparalleled death and destruction for over a century. The evidence was written into the creature's hide in the form of horrific scars, mementos of injuries that would have felled a stone giant twice over. The creature was surprisingly amicable to my inquiries, as long as I did not distract it from its training regime. However, every conversation topic pivoted back to its own exploits and accomplishments, as if it was trying to prove something. Certainly I have no doubts as to the creature's bloody capabilities, so I wonder to whom this persistent boasting was really directed.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Elite

Favors: Range, Rangers, Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Melee, Paladins, Spellcasters, Spells (Damaging), Weapons (Non-Magical)

The dragon can unleash devastating damage against a single target and gladly does so should a creature ignore tactics in favor of pure damage. An adult imperial dragon can recognize most spells and magical effects by sight alone, and it accurately estimates the strength of those effects by observing their casters. The dragon will typically hold its Breath Weapons until it knows it can disintegrate someone or until it needs to get magical effects out of the way. Once expended, the dragon will always recover its Breath Weapons as fast as possible.

Easier Tactics – The imperial dragon crushes those who are not making an effort to succeed, disgusted by their tactical blunders and suboptimal choices. It will offer considerable respect to those who have their act together, often letting combos and coordinated attacks succeed just to see how well they work. Unless gravely injured, the dragon will only down foes rather than kill them, and it will happily leave survivors if it thinks they will return for round two somewhere down the line.

Harder Tactics – Woe betide any creature the dragon views as either a deadly threat or a worthless nuisance. It will combine its Power Dive legendary action with its grappling Bite to move a single enemy away from its allies, choosing characters who require support or protection from nearby teammates. Hitting the dragon guarantees an overwhelming response, often a critical hit guaranteed by the dragon's Battlefield Supremacy legendary action. Adult imperial dragons are too large and confident to make much use of cover and will stay visible to creatures frightened of it for as long as possible to keep them out of the fight.

PLOT HOOKS

Exodus. A massive clan of giants has been driven into humanoid lands, their leader slain by an adult imperial dragon that now occupies their home. The dragon is hunting the giants down, furious at their decision to flee rather than fight to reclaim their home. The collateral damage caused by these conflicts is as extensive as it is catastrophic.

Power Couple. A pair of adult imperial dragons have mated, spawning a clutch of half a dozen eggs. Other dragon species are horrified but too scared to try and slay the couple. The prospect of two allied imperial dragons is terrifying enough, but add six wyrmlings and you have a disaster on a planar scale.

Fearsome Reputation. A small village has been benefiting from an imperial dragon's training regimen, which involves shattering boulders into usable chunks. The village has tried their best to keep things on the down low, but word has spread and dragonslayers are making their way to the peaceful community to "rescue them from the fearsome beast." The dragon has no wish to stop its productive workouts and is secretly looking for heroes to stage a "slaying" so it will be left alone.

ADULT IMPERIAL DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon, any lawful alignment

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 385 (22d20 + 154)
Speed 50 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	16 (+3)	25 (+7)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Str +16, Dex +10, Con +14, Wis +13
Skills Athletics +23, Insight +13, Intimidation +13, Perception +13, Survival +13
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities force
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 21 (27,500 XP)

TRAITS

Heavy Armor. The dragon reduces damage it takes from weapon attacks by 10.

Improved Critical. The dragon's weapon attacks score a critical hit on an 18–20.

Legendary Supremacy (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw or ability check, it can choose to succeed instead.

Spell Resistance. The dragon takes half damage from spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon uses its Dread Visage. It then makes three attacks: one with its Bite or Tail, and two with its Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (3d12 + 9) piercing damage and 21 (6d6) force damage. If the target is a creature, the dragon may grapple it (escape DC 24). Until this grapple ends, the dragon may not bite another target.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons:

- **Antimagic Bomb.** The dragon spits a globule of antimagic at a point within 60 feet which explodes in a 20-foot radius centered on that point. Each spell or magical effect in the area is dispelled as if affected by a *dispel magic* spell (+6 to dispel spells of 6th level or higher).
- **Force Breath.** The dragon exhales pure disintegrating force in a 300-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Everything in that line must attempt a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 93 (17d10) force damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this damage is disintegrated. Objects and structures in the area not being worn or carried take double damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (2d12 + 9) slashing damage.

Dread Visage. Each creature of the dragon's choice within 120 feet of the dragon that are aware of it must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened in this way, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from the dragon by the safest available route on each of its turns. If a creature ends its turn in a location where it can't see the dragon, it can attempt a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Dread Visage for 1 minute.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 20 ft., each target of the dragon's choice within range. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage. A creature hit by this attack must succeed on a DC 24 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon 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. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Battlefield Supremacy. Until the end of its next turn, when the dragon next scores a hit with a weapon attack, the hit deals double damage.

Deep Breath. The dragon recharges its Breath Weapons.

Power Dive (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon flies up to its speed in a straight line and immediately makes a weapon attack at the end of that movement. On a successful hit, the attack deals an additional 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 20 feet the dragon moved via this feature.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a Tail attack.

ANCIENT IMPERIAL DRAGON

Supremely powerful, imperial dragons that live to become ancient have legendary exploits and a tremendous body count spanning generations. To common folk, these dragons appear surprisingly peaceful and personable. The wise know better, for an ancient imperial dragon is the ultimate apex predator. Their perceived benevolence is in actuality profound boredom. There is simply no one interesting left to fight. Even if something strong enough to interest these dragons were to come along, odds are it would have nothing new to offer and would simply be a repeat of battles from ages past. Only the extraordinarily strong and uniquely powerful can get these dragons' attention. Once alerted to the presence of a worthy foe, an ancient imperial dragon will go to any lengths to pick a fight, just to break the monotony of everyday life.

The Ancient Imperial Dragon

I now understand why other dragons are humbled by this species. Had I known the potential to become such a fearsome creature existed in each wyrmling, I would have been far less charitable in my initial judgements. As I pen this entry, I struggle to conceive of a single weakness a venerable imperial dragon possesses. No spell, blade, or secret technique can lay them low. Only titanic effort, considerable luck, and brilliant planning afford a chance at success. Such power teaches us that no matter what we achieve, no matter how mighty we become, there is always something greater. If there is an answer to what is the strongest being in existence, these dragons will become it.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Elite

Favors: Range, Rangers, Warlocks, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Melee, Paladins, Spellcasters, Spells (Damaging), Weapons (Non-Magical)

TACTICS

Ancient imperial dragons are massive, far larger than most other creatures. They dominate the battlefield with their presence. Nothing is beyond their reach, and no defense is proof against their attacks. Even the most powerful of characters are lucky to survive a round or two of concentrated damage from one of these dragons, and those who do will forever bear the scars to prove it. In any conflict, the dragon will know exactly who it needs to kill and in exactly what order to best guarantee victory. An ancient imperial dragon accepts nothing but absolute victory against those at whom it bares its teeth. Enemies with powerful tools such *resurrection* or other manners of cheating death are swiftly hunted down and exterminated, as survivors are a dishonorable stain upon the dragon's reputation.

Easier Tactics – The dragon immediately uses its Breath Weapons and Dreadful Visage. Should that prove to not immediately shatter a party's resolve, the dragon will reward their resilience by battling like a punch-drunk warrior, "playing" more than fighting. This behavior is eerily similar to a cat playing with a mouse. The dragon will waste actions to demonstrate its absolute superiority, crushing a character's defenses before cleaving them into unconsciousness.

Harder Tactics – The dragon has several lifetimes of experience to draw upon in battle, and it shows. Use any strategies from younger imperial dragons which you feel will be the most effective. The dragon takes particular delight in immediately dismantling any strategy or defense concocted by its attackers. A well-played imperial dragon is never the one being attacked—it is the hunter and all the world its prey. At best a party can expect to be assaulted before they have a chance to prepare, the dragon having anticipated their every effort well in advance. The dragon has nothing to prove, and if its enemies can't offer resistance while at their worst, they don't deserve to face the dragon at their best.

PLOT HOOKS

So Comfy! An ancient imperial dragon has fallen asleep in the middle of a bustling city. Extremely inconvenient for the residents, the dragon is far too comfortable to move. Unless something to catch its interest can be found, the beast will likely remain for quite some time.

Year of the Dragon. Dragons from across the world are rallying to the banner of an ancient imperial dragon claiming to be the legendary Dragon Sovereign. With an army of more than two dozen adult dragons and growing, few forces in the world are able to resist the militia, let alone its formidable leader.

Dragon Fight Club. A cabal of wizards has been commissioned by an imperial dragon. Their magic is used to summon powerful creatures from other worlds for the dragon to fight. As cosmic horrors are being pulled from across the planes, many become worried about what may happen if a creature powerful enough to best the ancient dragon is summoned.

ANCIENT IMPERIAL DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon, any lawful alignment

Armor Class 25 (natural armor)
Hit Points 546 (28d20 + 252)
Speed 60 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	18 (+4)	28 (+9)	19 (+4)	23 (+6)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Str +18, Dex +12, Con +17, Wis +14
Skills Athletics +26, Insight +14, Intimidation +16, Perception +14, Survival +14
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities force
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 27 (105,000 XP)

TRAITS

Deathproof. If an effect would kill the dragon, it may instead lose half its current hit points (rounded down) to survive instead. The dragon cannot use this feature if it has fewer than 50 hit points.

Heavy Armor. The dragon reduces damage it takes from weapon attacks by 15.

Immense. The dragon's form is tremendous. It is 60 feet long from snout to tail and has a wingspan of more than 80 feet. On the battlefield, the dragon typically occupies a 25-foot-by-25-foot space. The dragon can end its movement in a Huge or smaller creature's space and does not treat such spaces as difficult terrain when moving through them.

Improved Critical. The dragon's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a 17–20.

Legendary Supremacy (5/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw or ability check, it can choose to succeed instead.

Spell Resistance. The dragon takes half damage from spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon uses its Dread Visage. It then makes three attacks: one with its Bite or Tail, and two with its Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (4d12 + 10) piercing damage and 28 (8d6) force damage. If the target is a creature, the dragon may grapple it (escape DC 26). Until this grapple ends, the dragon may not bite another target.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons:

- **Antimagic Bomb.** The dragon spits a globule of antimagic at a point within 60 feet which explodes in a 20-foot radius centered on that point. Each spell or magical effect in the area is dispelled as if affected by a *dispel magic* spell (+6 to dispel spells of 7th level or higher).
- **Force Breath.** The dragon exhales a pure disintegrating force in a 500-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Everything in that line must succeed on a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw, taking 110 (20d10) force damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this damage is disintegrated. Objects and structures in the area not being worn or carried take double damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (3d12 + 10) slashing damage.

Dread Visage. Each creature of the dragon's choice within 120 feet of the dragon that are aware of it must succeed on a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. While frightened in this way, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from the dragon by the safest available route on each of its turns. If a creature ends its turn in a location where it can't see the dragon, it can attempt a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Dread Visage for 1 minute.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 15 ft., each target of the dragon's choice within range. *Hit:* 26 (3d10 + 10) bludgeoning damage. A creature hit by this attack must succeed on a DC 24 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon 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. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Battlefield Supremacy. Until the end of its next turn, when the dragon next scores a hit with a weapon attack, the hit deals double damage.

Deep Breath. The dragon recharges its Breath Weapons.

Power Dive (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon flies up to its speed in a straight line and immediately makes a weapon attack at the end of that movement. On a successful hit, the attack deals an additional 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 20 feet the dragon moved via this feature.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a Tail attack.

Lynchwoods

The darkness that lurks in the hearts of mortals makes itself known in many ways, and few are as vile as mob justice. When the masses skirt the law, ignore systems of justice, and choose to end a life over a personal vendetta, the result can be something monstrous. The victim's lifeblood drains into the earth, suffused with their anguish and a thirst for vengeance. Should the roots of a moss oak drink deeply from this blood, the spirit of the victim merges with the tree's gnarled form, granting it tremendous power and a cruel sentience. These colossal creatures are known as lynchwoods, and their punishing nooses have brought countless guilt-ridden folk to a grisly end. With supernatural senses and incredible strength, lynchwoods are rightly feared by all who have committed evil acts and gotten away with it—or so they thought.

LYNCHWOOD

Most lynchwoods are of this standard variety, rapidly growing from sapling to tall, misshapen moss oak. They wait patiently for the guilty to enter their domain, supernaturally detecting the stain an unpunished evil act leaves upon the soul. Anyone who committed a crime for which they have not yet made amends is at risk of hanging from a lynchwood's branches, which are revealed to be full of living nooses as soon as the tree attacks. Minor offenses may be ignored, but should a murderer or worse catch the lynchwood's attention, it rears up and attempts to choke the life from the wrongdoer.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a lynchwood with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

LYNCHWOOD LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	Humanoids who die unjust, cruel deaths at the hands of a mob sometimes linger, their souls trapped in the earth where they grow into twisted, sentient trees. Filled with rage and fury, they can sense feelings of guilt in those who pass by, and leap from the soil, using their massive size and twisting branches to catch and strangle those they deem criminal.
20	Destroying a lynchwood requires destroying the heartwood in its core, but it is well guarded by the creature's branches. Lynchwoods are far swifter than they appear, and their nooses can drain the air from a victim's lungs.
25	A lynchwood is resistant to fire, lightning, and physical harm. Using other forms of damage over a large area can destroy many of the twisting, noose-like vines it relies on to snare victims and deals severe harm to the entire creature.

TACTICS

As a titanic creature, a lynchwood is more complex than most single creatures. It's best to think of it as three separate creatures that share the same space. The branches act first, on initiative count 15, and should try to hit as many characters as possible with their Ensnare attacks. Remember that each attack must target a different creature; if there are fewer than six targets in reach, the extra attacks are wasted.

The core's turns are the most complex. First, use Unified Being to transfer hit points from the core to the branches or roots if either of those sections are below half their hit point maximum. Then, use Paralyzing Doubt if available to debilitate as many characters as possible. After that, use Brutalize first to try to knock a character prone, and then follow up with Gouge on the same target, preferring characters who aren't restrained by the branches.

When the roots act on initiative count 5, the lynchwood can move. Try to position it near multiple characters so the branches can target them all with its Ensnare attacks and use Stomp, if available, so they can't escape. Characters who act before initiative count 15 can easily get out of the way before the branches get to act, so focus on dragging them closer with Grasping Root.

Easier Tactics – Don't use all the Ensnare attacks on the branches' turn, delay using Paralyzing Doubt and Stomp from the core and roots, and make sure every section is attacking different characters. You can further decrease the difficulty by having the lynchwood move more slowly so it can't reach as many characters with its attacks.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Creation mythologies frequently state murder was the first evil act. Without delving too deeply into the philosophical and epistemological debate surrounding the taking of life, it is sufficient to say most societies disapprove of it and take steps to prevent murder from occurring. However, I have all too often witnessed supposedly "civilized" societies form an angry mob in pursuit of an alleged wrongdoer, too blinded by hate to allow for the function of law, or sometimes even to distinguish between guilty and innocent! It is the sad fates of such innocents that give rise to the lynchwoods. These creatures are supernatural avatars of vengeance, ensuring that those who commit evil acts be punished with a deserving fate. I recommend to any who live with the guilt of evil upon their souls that they turn themselves in. Even the most iron-hearted paladin is more forgiving then a lynchwood's cruel noose.

Harder Tactics — If the core uses Brutalize and Gouge on a character grappled by the branches, it will deal serious damage. Furthermore, if that character fails the saving throw against Gouge, the victim has disadvantage on ability checks (among other things) and is much less likely to be able to free itself from the grapple. Use the roots to fend off anyone trying to help the lynchwood's victim, and always use Paralyzing Doubt whenever it is available.

PLOT HOOKS

Hanging Cats. The Bramblepelts, a gang of tabaxi brigands, approaches the party for help. Their members are disappearing in the forest, and they suspect a rogue treant. In truth, a lynchwood is responsible for the thinning of their pack.

Injustice. Humanoids slain by the party are rising again as lynchwoods with alarming frequency. Something a character has done (either recently or in the distant past) has had long-reaching consequences affecting hundreds of innocents. Until the guilty atones, the lynchwoods will continue to grow and pursue their prey.

Heartwood of Darkness. A lynchwood recognizes one member of the party, calling out to the character specifically. It offers to help the character take revenge on someone, but there may be a cost to working with such a tortured soul.

The Lynchwood

What is most fascinating to me about the common lynchwood is the unique shape of each's values. Depending on the individual who became the lynchwood, and the values and beliefs held by the individual in life, any given lynchwood might be predisposed to attack thieves, killers, or even adulterers above all else. Whatever they perceived as the greatest sin they seek to punish in others, for all must abide by their code of conduct and ethics. Tragically, it is usually failing to abide by that code that resulted in the lynchwood's creation. In death the spirit holds itself and others to a standard it could never maintain.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Area-of-Effect, Druids, Initiative (High), Sorcerers, Wizards

Foils: Attacks (Single-Target), Monks, Rangers, Rogues, Strength (Low)

TREASURE

At the core of a lynchwood is its heartwood, a dense and durable wood shaped by the befouled energies of the lynchwood's red-hot soul. The heartwood is dark, appearing almost ashen and charred, with faint lines of green running through it. It can be used to create a spellcasting focus called a *solstice needle*. Creating a solstice needle from a lynchwood's heartwood requires a successful DC 22 Wisdom (Carpenter's Tools) check. On a failure, the heartwood is mangled and becomes worthless.

Solstice Needle

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a druid or ranger)

This 6-inch-long needle of charred wood pulses with a dark green light. Attuning to it requires pricking your finger and allowing a drop of blood to run down the needle's length. Once attuned, if anyone other than you attempts to attune to the needle, it immediately collapses into dust and is destroyed. The solstice needle has 5 charges and regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn.

A druid holding this needle can use it as a spellcasting focus. When you cast a druid spell that deals damage using the needle as the focus, you can expend 1 charge to deal the maximum possible damage instead of rolling. Additionally, when you cast a druid spell that requires targeted creatures to attempt a saving throw, you can expend 2 charges to force targets of the spell to make their first saving throw against the spell with disadvantage.

A ranger can wear the needle on a thin chain as an amulet and still gain its benefits. When you cast a ranger spell that requires concentration, you can expend 1 charge to have the solstice needle maintain concentration on the spell in your place. You are not considered to be concentrating on the spell and don't need to make Constitution saving throws when you take damage to maintain the spell. Additionally, when you score a critical hit with a weapon attack, you can expend 1 charge to deal the maximum possible damage instead of rolling.

ECOLOGY

Lynchwoods lurk near towns and other small settlements that lack a sufficient militia or powerful adventurers to hunt down and destroy the trees. They prey at night, hunting down those who flee into the woods after committing a crime. Many communities are content to coexist with a lynchwood, using the creature as an extreme solution to the criminal element in its society. Those who are guilty of evil find no mercy from a lynchwood. It cannot be bribed, persuaded, or tricked into sparing the guilty, no matter how repentant they may be—it is not the lynchwood they should be apologizing to, but their victims. Death by hanging is always a lynchwood's sentence.

LYNCHWOOD

Titanic plant, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points special
Speed special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (+0)	25 (+7)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +11, Con +12, Wis +8
Skills Nature +7, Perception +13
Damage Resistances fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing
Senses darkvision 120 ft., Sense Guilt (see traits) 300 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Druidic, Sylvan
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Perfect Camouflage. While motionless, the lynchwood is indistinguishable from a tree, albeit one that is misshapen and disturbing in appearance.

Sense Guilt. The lynchwood can sense the presence of creatures within 300 feet of it that are guilty of committing an evil act without atoning or being punished for said act. Guilty creatures cannot be hidden from the lynchwood, and the lynchwood can always perceive said creatures even if they are invisible or magically concealed.

Titanic Creature. The lynchwood is a Titanic creature encompassing a 25-foot-by-25-foot space and standing 60 feet high. It is so large that combat involves dividing its body up into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the lynchwood if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the lynchwood's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the lynchwood is slain, which causes all sections to die along with the lynchwood. If a section has a speed, the lynchwood can move up to that section's speed during its turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the lynchwood, which is considered difficult terrain, and the lynchwood cannot make opportunity attacks. Additionally, the lynchwood is immune to effects that would forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport it or any of its parts.

Unstoppable. The lynchwood can move through nonmagical obstacles made of stone, wood, earth, or metal as though they were difficult terrain. Doing so destroys any object smaller than the lynchwood or deals 50 bludgeoning damage to objects the lynchwood's size or larger.

BRANCHES

Hit Points 140 (8d20 + 56)
Initiative Count 15

TRAITS

Hanging Snares. The lynchwood's branches twist and contort into noose-like shapes. The lynchwood has six nooses, each of which has AC 15 and 25 hit points. Destroying a noose frees any creature grappled by it. At the start of each of the branches' turns, the lynchwood regrows two nooses, up to its maximum of six.

Position. The branches of the lynchwood are at least 40 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 25 feet wide, 25 feet long, and 20 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lynchwood makes one Ensnare attack for each noose it has that is not grappling a creature, no two of which can share the same target.

Ensnare. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 20 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 20 (4d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the target is pulled up to 20 feet to a space within 5 feet of the lynchwood, lifted 30 feet in the air, and grappled (escape DC 19). While grappled in this way the target is unable to speak or breathe. At the start of each of its turns, a grappled creature must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or lose 14 (4d6) hit points and begin suffocating. If the creature succeeds on this saving throw, it prevents the hit point loss and the creature can breathe until the start of its next turn, but still can't speak.

ROOTS

Hit Points 157 (9d20 + 63)
Initiative Count 5
Speed 20 ft.

TRAITS

Position. The roots of the lynchwood are directly below the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 25 feet wide, 25 feet long, and 5 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lynchwood uses Stomp if available, then makes one Grasping Root attack.

Grasping Root. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 50 ft., one target on the ground. *Hit:* 20 (4d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the target is pulled to an unoccupied space within 10 feet of the lynchwood.

Stomp (Recharge 4–6). The lynchwood slams its bulk into the ground, projecting a magical shockwave in a 60-foot radius along the ground. All creatures other than the lynchwood in the area must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 33 (6d10) thunder damage and fall prone. A successful saving throw halves the damage and prevents a creature from falling prone.

CORE

Hit Points 210 (12d20 + 84)
Initiative Count 10
Speed 20 ft.

TRAITS

Position. The core of the lynchwood is at least 5 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 25 feet wide, 25 feet long, and 35 feet tall.

Shielded by Nature. While the lynchwood's branches have at least one hit point, attacks against its core have disadvantage.

Unified Being. At the start of each of the core's turns it can choose to lose up to 50 hit points and cause another of its sections to gain an equal number of hit points.

Vulnerability. When the core is reduced to 0 hit points, the lynchwood is slain.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lynchwood uses Paralyzing Doubt if available, then makes one Brutalize attack and one Gouge attack.

Brutalize. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the target is knocked prone.

Gouge. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (4d6 + 6) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be wracked with physical pain at the end of its turn. While under this effect the target has disadvantage on all attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Paralyzing Doubt (Recharge 5–6). The lynchwood emits a mournful wail in a 60-foot radius. Enemy creatures in the area that can hear the lynchwood must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns an affected creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

ELDER STRANGLER

A lynchwood of great age who is watered by the blood of innumerable victims eventually becomes the venerable and terrible elder strangler. The exact conditions under which the metamorphosis occurs are not known but it causes a tangible change in the creature. It becomes infused with undeath, and those who fall prey to its strangling branches are reanimated as zombies, thrashing about while still leashed to the tree, tearing at the flesh of new victims. More massive than an ordinary lynchwood and far deadlier, elder stranglers dominate the landscape with their twisted, unnatural forms.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an elder strangler with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

ELDER STRANGLER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Long-lived lynchwoods eventually mutate, becoming elders of their kind. This causes an upwelling of necrotic energy that animates the corpses hanging from the lynchwood's branches, creating zombies that lash out with hands and teeth at anything they can reach while they still dangle from the noose-like vines.
21	When an elder strangler animates, it awakens a primal fear in all but the most stalwart hearts. It possesses all the abilities of a typical lynchwood, in addition to the animated corpses flailing in its branches. These zombies, once slain, can be launched as living bombs, detonating on impact.
26	Spells and other abilities that affect a large area are your best hope of defeating an elder strangler. While the creature itself is resistant to fire and lightning, the zombified corpses have no such protections and are easily scorched away by well-placed magic. Keep your distance at all costs, for an elder strangler's strength greatly surpasses its lesser kin.

TACTICS

As with the lynchwood, think of running an encounter with an elder strangler as using four creatures that occupy the same space. New to the elder strangler is the flailing corpses section, which acts immediately after the branches. It starts with five zombies, allowing for five attacks. Use the Claw attacks against any creatures grappled by the strangler. Unlike the Ensnare attacks, the same creature can be targeted by multiple Claw attacks, meaning being the only one grappled by the strangler is exceedingly dangerous. If any zombies are reduced to low hit points, use Fling Zombie to lob one at the most densely packed characters.

After that, the core's turn is next. Start with Unified Being to restore the branches or roots if either is below half of its hit point maximum. The core can move up to 20 feet, allowing the strangler to reposition itself. Then, use Paralyzing Doubt followed by Brutalize and Gouge, both attacks against the same target, favoring one not grappled by the strangler.

When the roots act, use Stomp whenever you can and Grasping Roots to pull ranged characters in close. The roots can move quite a bit quicker for an elder strangler, and you can have them take the Dash action to swiftly traverse the battlefield against highly mobile characters.

Easier Tactics – Just like the lynchwood, spreading out damage, holding back on using recharging abilities, and inefficient mobility are the best ways to make this fight easier. You can have the elder strangler prioritize difficult-to-hit characters, pounding away ineffectually at a raging barbarian while giving the rogue an open shot.

Harder Tactics – For a truly dastardly combat style, grab a character or two with the branches and have both the core and the roots use the Dash action to retreat, moving the strangler a total of 100 feet away from the party. Most characters will struggle to keep up, and in a dense forest, even

The Elder Strangler

The oldest and most enduring of the lynchwoods I have dubbed 'elders' in recognition that persistence brings power to the spirit within the bark. The longer such a creature remains in this world, stuck and unable to move on, the more concentrated its necrotic energies become. The bodies of the strangler's victims writhe with undeath, animating as zombies even as they dangle from the tree's ensnaring branches. I have been searching for ways to peaceably pacify the stranglers but have not yet discovered any methods of repute. Ever the optimist, Shana Troublefoot suggested I "get a whole bunch of life magic and blow the ghost right out of the leaves!" She also made some highly descriptive sound effects that I won't attempt to transcribe.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute
Favors: Druids, Flight, Range, Rangers, Warlocks
Foils: Fighters, Hit Points (Low), Melee, Monks, Rogues



ranged attackers will struggle to draw a bead on the strangler. The flailing corpses can attack even as the strangler moves away, and once the party is far enough back that they can't easily help, the core can join in with Brutalize and Gouge attacks. A party that doesn't react quickly and correctly is going to be split up and torn apart.

PLOT HOOKS

Have You Seen This Druid? An archdruid goes missing after promising to cleanse a cursed forest of its evil. Either the druid fell prey to an elder strangler, or the druid started the disappearance rumors to lure adventurers into the strangler's grasp.

Secret Ingredient. The party must perform the ritual of grand atonement (see the "Treasure" section for details) and need the heartwood of an elder strangler. Some theorize that, if presented with an offering of a grievous sinner, the elder strangler may be pacified while feeding, allowing the heartwood to be harvested without a fight.

Knock on Wood. An elder strangler has a powerful magical weapon lodged in its bark, a weapon the party needs. Can they brave the cursed lands surrounding the strangler and recover the item?

TREASURE

The heartwood of an elder strangler is part of a solemn and terrible ritual called "grand atonement." It is up to your discretion where the remaining components are found as well as how the party can learn to perform this ritual. The heartwood can be sold for 6,000 gp to druids, rangers, or other interested collectors.

A willing participant may submit themselves to the ritual, which must be led by a druid of 11th level or higher. The ritual lasts for 24 hours. During this time, the participant's mind calls forth every evil act they have committed. The victims of those crimes, be they living or dead, are contacted telepathically. If they choose to answer, they materialize as an illusory version of themselves near the ritual and can see, hear, and speak freely from the illusion. A creature that sincerely begs for forgiveness from each of its victims atones for all of its evil deeds and can start its life anew without the stain of guilt upon its conscience.

ECOLOGY

Elder stranglers have led successful careers in mass murder. To accomplish this task the strangler must have either lived for an incredibly long time or lived near an enormous population that did not mind their presence. After drinking the blood of the guilty for so long, an elder strangler has developed a discerning taste. They will pass up "lesser evils" like crimes of passion or murder in self-defense, thirsting only for the blood of the guiltiest. Mass murders, tyrants, and even experienced adventurers shake awake a slumbering strangler, which pursues such creatures with relentless ferocity. Otherwise the trees lie dormant and will remain so for years until a suitable victim enters their domain.

ELDER STRANGLER

Titanic plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points special
Speed special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	26 (+8)	5 (-3)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +15, Con +14, Wis +11
Skills Insight +17, Nature +9, Perception +17
Damage Resistances fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing
Senses darkvision 300 ft., Sense Guilt (see traits) 1 mile, passive Perception 27
Languages Druidic, Sylvan
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Horrifying Awakening. When the strangler enters combat, all creatures within 120 feet that can see it must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the strangler for 1 minute. Affected creatures can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on a success.

Perfect Camouflage. While motionless, the strangler is indistinguishable from a tree, albeit one that is misshapen and disturbing in appearance.

Sense Guilt. The strangler can sense the presence of creatures within 1 mile of it that are guilty of committing an evil act without atoning or being punished for said act. Guilty creatures cannot be hidden from the strangler, and the strangler can always perceive said creatures even if they are invisible or magically concealed.

Titanic Creature. The strangler is a titanic creature encompassing a 30-foot-by-30-foot space and standing 80 feet high. It is so large that combat involves dividing its body up into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the strangler if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the strangler's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the strangler is slain, which causes all sections to die along with the strangler. If a section has a speed, the strangler can move up to that section's speed during its turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the strangler, which is considered difficult terrain, and the strangler cannot make opportunity attacks. Additionally, the strangler is immune to effects that would forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport it.

Unstoppable. The strangler can move through nonmagical obstacles made of stone, wood, earth, or metal as though they were difficult terrain. Doing so destroys any object smaller than the strangler or deals 100 bludgeoning damage to objects of the strangler's size or larger.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing an elder strangler is corrupted by its evil presence, which creates the following effects within 1 mile of where the strangler lives.

- Small animals inexplicably manage to strangle themselves on objects and plants in their environment.
- The bark of nearby trees contorts into humanoid faces, some of which resemble famous murderers and other evildoers that once frequented the area.
- Maps of the area are always inaccurate, with all marked paths invariably leading toward the elder strangler.

If the strangler is slain, these effects fade over the course of 1 year.

BRANCHES

Hit Points 203 (11d20 + 88)
Initiative Count 20

TRAITS

Eternal Vengeance. A creature killed while grappled by the strangler's snares is immediately animated as a zombified corpse. See the Flailing Corpses section for details.

Hanging Snares. The strangler's branches twist and contort into noose-like shapes. The strangler has twelve nooses, six of which start with animated zombies (see the Flailing Corpses section for details). Each noose has AC 18 and 40 hit points. Destroying a noose frees any creature grappled by it. At the start of each of the branches' turns, the strangler regrows three nooses, up to its maximum.

Position. The branches of the strangler are at least 50 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 30 feet wide, 30 feet long, and 30 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The strangler make one Ensnare attack for each noose that is not grappling a creature or holding a zombie (see the Failing Zombies section), no two of which can be against the same creature.

Ensnare. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 23 (4d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage and the target is pulled up to 20 feet to a space within 5 feet of the strangler, lifted 40 feet in the air, and grappled (escape DC 22). While grappled in this way, the target is unable to breath or speak. At the start of each of its turns, the creature must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or lose 21 (6d6) hit points and begin suffocating. If the creature succeeds on this saving throw, it prevents the hit point loss and the creature can breathe until the start of its next turn, but still can't speak.

FLAILING CORPSES

Hit Points special (see Zombified Victims)
Initiative Count 15

TRAITS

Position. The strangler's flailing corpses share the same space as its core and branches sections.

Zombified Victims. The corpses of those already killed by the strangler are animated as flailing zombies. Each of these corpses has AC 12 and 40 hit points. The strangler starts with six corpses and can hold up to twelve. When this section has no corpses remaining, it becomes incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The strangler makes one Claw attack for each zombie with more than 0 hit points currently hanging from its branches, then it uses Fling Zombie, if able.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature grappled by the strangler. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

Fling Zombie. The strangler can only take this action if it has at least one zombie with 1 or more hit points. The strangler launches a zombie at a point it can see within 60 feet. The zombie detonates on impact in a cloud of filth and pestilence in a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on the point. All living creatures in the area must attempt a DC 22 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) necrotic damage plus 22 (5d8) poison damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

ROOTS

Hit Points 185 (10d20 + 80)
Initiative Count 5
Speed 30 ft.

TRAITS

Position. The roots of the strangler are directly below the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 30 feet wide, 30 feet long, and 10 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The strangler uses Stomp if available, then makes one Grasping Roots attack.

Grasping Roots. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (6d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage and the target is pulled to another unoccupied space within 10 feet of the strangler.

Stomp (Recharge 5–6). The strangler slams its bulk into the ground, projecting a magical shockwave in a 60-foot radius along the ground. All creatures other than the strangler in the area must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 44 (8d10) thunder damage and fall prone. A successful saving throw halves the damage and prevents a creature from falling prone.

CORE

Hit Points 333 (18d20 + 144)
Initiative Count 10
Speed 20 ft.

TRAITS

Position. The core of the strangler is at least 10 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 30 feet wide, 30 feet long, and 40 feet tall.

Shielded by Nature. While the strangler's branches are active, attacks against the core have disadvantage.

Unified Being. At the start of each of the core's turns it can choose to lose up to 100 hit points and transfer them to its other sections. The branches and the roots can each regain hit points, with the strangler dividing the total lost by the core among these sections.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The strangler uses Paralyzing Doubt if available, then makes one Gouge attack and one Brutalize attack.

Brutalize. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (6d8 + 9) bludgeoning damage and the target is knocked prone.

Gouge. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (6d6 + 9) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or be wracked with physical pain at the end of its turn. While under this effect the target has disadvantage on all attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Paralyzing Doubt (Recharge 5–6). The strangler emits a mournful wail in a 120-foot radius. Enemy creatures in the area that can hear the strangler must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns an affected creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

BLOODBARK EXECUTIONER

The greatest and most feared of all the lynchwoods, the bloodbark executioners are born of acts of genocide. When countless innocents are slaughtered beneath the leaves of a great tree, their collective rage and thirst for vengeance gives rise to this horrific creature. A bloodbark executioner is bright crimson in color, its great trunk stretching over 200 feet into the air (though larger specimens have been rumored to exist). On the creature's core is a colossal face whose details phase daily between those of the innocents who gave birth to it. Its heights are adorned with screaming mouths that emit the agonized wails of the executioner's victims, too numerous to count. The leaves of a bloodborn executioner are shaped like serrated knives, and from its canopy hang countless noose-shaped vines. Thankfully an executioner is a sedentary creature, kept in place by a network of roots that stretch for miles in all directions that allow the creature to detect the presence of the guilty.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a bloodbark executioner with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

BLOODBARK EXECUTIONER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Ferociously powerful and utterly merciless, the bloodbark executioner is a stationary tree that can strangle, decapitate, consume, and lure creatures who are guilty of crimes for which they have not atoned. There is no escaping an executioner's wrath once you have gotten its attention.
24	The bloodbark executioner can toy with the minds of its victims, inflicting horrific visions that shatter one's perception of reality and unleashing eerie wails that draw creatures to it. Its gaze can corrode flesh, and its presence can drain magic at an astonishing rate.
30	Approach a bloodbark executioner cautiously and with covered ears. Do everything in your power to avoid standing beneath the creature's canopy, for if you are drawn into its branches, it's off with your head. The executioner can't move from where it has grown but has no other known weaknesses.

The Bloodbark Executioner

By the gods, what an atrocity of a creature. Let the bloodbark executioner serve as the perfect example as to why evil never pays. These trees are living monuments to those slain by evil hands, and it is best to leave them alone at any cost. They never move, creaking slowly to life whenever the stain of guilt enters their territory. Woe betide any fool who dares to test the powers of the bloodbark executioner, whose nooses both strangle and decapitate any foolish enough to come within range. I have yet to discover what the tree does with all the heads it collects, but I'm not sure I want to find out.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Elite

Favors: Bards, Flight, Sorcerers, Teleportation, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Hit Points (High), Rogues, Stealth

TACTICS

The bloodbark executioner makes for an incredibly unique encounter. Because it cannot move, the characters will typically get to choose how they engage with the creature. Use Perfect Camouflage and Cacophony of the Condemned to even the playing field and draw the characters into suboptimal position. Your goal is to get the majority of the party within 200 feet of the executioner so that it can make Ensnare attacks. The effects of Ensnare combined with Hoist are deadly, decapitating characters in a few short rounds. The executioner has a host of other powerful effects in play. Use Bite to swallow troublesome melee characters that refuse to be strangled, and disrupt frustrating magical effects with Drain Magic. The executioner has a ton of hit points across all of its sections, so it can afford to play the long game for the right moment to strike. If the characters are proving too coordinated for the executioner to handle, use Visions of Atrocity to disrupt them. Many class features, like paladin auras, can only affect allied creatures, so have your characters check their features to see what no longer works under this effect. Keep sections in play with Unified Being and Nourish. Ideally the characters will need to take out the majority of the sections before finally slaying the executioner.

Easier Tactics — Never use Hoist twice in a row. Have the executioner fight in an open area with lots of room to maneuver. The creature should focus on characters who have committed the most egregious evil acts, ignoring or refusing to harm more innocent characters. This relative benevolence changes if the executioner gets too low on hit points, but it should have provided a pretty big edge by that point.

Harder Tactics — Use Cacophony of the Condemned as soon as the characters get within 500 feet of the tree. Unless the characters are expecting a giant, weird-looking redwood tree to come alive and attack them, this should grant the executioner surprise. This is bad news for anyone who fails Cacophony's save, as all affected characters rush toward the executioner at top speed. Immediately use Drain Magic on the most powerful magical effects, especially *freedom of movement* or similar effects. Have the core ready its Bite action, then put a target in a Blood Pond before unleashing the Bite. This almost guarantees the target is swallowed, which is bad news for all but the most robust of characters.

PLOT HOOKS

Rite of Spring. A bloodbark executioner has grown strange blue flowers in the shape of humanoid hands. A powerful circle of druids fears that the creature is somehow reproducing and seeks its destruction before the end of spring.

Grove of Anguish. An ancient oak grove was the site of a horrific massacre and contains three bloodbark executioners. A tribe of wood elves maintains the grove, offering the three's executioner services in exchange for funds to maintain the grove. When one of the characters' allies ends up on the chopping block, the only exchange the bloodbark executioners will accept for the NPC's freedom are three powerful villains who have so far eluded justice.

Song of the Slain. A bard has opened a dialogue with a bloodbark executioner to learn how it came to be. The kingdom secretly responsible for the mass murder that created the creature seeks the bard's death before the truth is revealed.

TREASURE

Bloodbark executioners accumulate quite a bit of treasure around their roots, typically a small fortune at the very least. Even the purest-hearted creatures are hesitant to reclaim these valuables on the off chance they unknowingly committed an evil act that would anger the executioner. Additionally, the sap of a bloodbark executioner is a dark crimson and is unusually poisonous to evil creatures. A bloodbark executioner can provide a near-limitless supply of the poison but rarely does so willingly.

Ravaging Guilt (Contact). An evil creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this manner the creature's Wisdom is 1 and it cannot benefit from a short or long rest. A creature can only be cured of this poison if it atones for an evil act it has committed. If a creature would be immune to the effects of this poison, it is instead not immune and has advantage on saving throws against its effects.

ECOLOGY

Wherever bloodbark executioners grow, darkness follows. The colossal trees are almost unrivaled for their size, standing out among other plant life with their vibrant, red bark. Sentient creatures find living near these creatures almost impossible, as their reach extends for miles due to an expansive root system. A bloodbark's wailing cacophony is unsettling to all who hear it, and only the bravest or most insane knowingly inhabit their domain. Because of this, abandoned homes and other structures are found everywhere within a bloodbark executioner's domain, their residents having long since fled or fallen prey to the malevolent plant. These trees have been known to grow almost anywhere—the only prerequisites for their genesis are solid ground and an unspeakable atrocity.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing a bloodbark executioner is corrupted by its evil presence, which creates the following effects within 10 miles of where the executioner lives.

- Strange roots cover objects and structures, their shapes twisting into strangely artistic interpretations of mob violence and bloody scenes.
- Creatures guilty of an evil act for which they have not atoned experience vivid hallucinations whenever they take a short or long rest. The hallucinations are always of the atrocities they have committed, but from the perspective of their victims.
- Natural water formations are stained a brilliant, blood red.

If the executioner is slain, these effects fade over the course of 1 year.

BLOODBARK EXECUTIONER

Titanic plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points special
Speed special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	10 (+0)	30 (+10)	12 (+1)	27 (+8)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +18, Con +18, Int +9, Wis +16
Skills Insight +24, Nature +17, Perception +24
Damage Resistances fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing
Senses darkvision 300 ft., Sense Guilt (see traits) 10 miles, passive Perception 34
Languages Druidic, Sylvan
Challenge 28 (120,000 XP)

TRAITS

Perfect Camouflage. While motionless, the executioner is indistinguishable from a tree, albeit one that is misshapen, humongous, and disturbing in appearance.

Sense Guilt. The executioner can sense the presence of creatures within 10 miles of it that are guilty of committing an evil act without atoning or being punished for said act. Guilty creatures cannot be hidden from the executioner, and the executioner can always perceive said creatures even if they are invisible or magically concealed.

Titanic Creature. The executioner is a titanic creature encompassing a 50-foot-by-50-foot space and standing 200 feet high. It is so large that combat involves dividing its body up into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the executioner if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the executioner's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the executioner is slain, which causes all sections to die along with the executioner. If a section has a speed, the executioner can move up to that section's speed during its turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the executioner, which is considered difficult terrain, and the executioner cannot make opportunity attacks. Additionally, the executioner is immune to effects that would forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport it.

CANOPY

Hit Points 307 (15d20 + 150)
Initiative Count 20

TRAITS

Hanging Snares. The executioner's branches twist and contort into noose-like shapes, each of which has AC 20 and 60 hit points. The executioner has countless snares at its disposal. Destroying a noose frees any creature grappled by it.

Position. The canopy of the executioner is at least 160 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 100 feet wide, 100 feet long, and 40 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The executioner make one Ensnare attack against each creature of its choice within range.

Ensnare. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 200 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 31 (6d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage and the target is pulled to a space within 50 feet of the executioner, lifted 20 feet in the air, and grappled (escape DC 24). While grappled in this way, the target is unable to breath. At the start of each of its turns, the creature must succeed on a DC 24 Strength saving throw or lose 35 (10d6) hit points and begin suffocating. If the creature succeeds on this saving throw, it prevents the hit point loss and the creature can breathe until the start of its next turn.

Hoist. Each creature grappled by the executioner's Ensnare feature is hoisted 60 feet upward toward its canopy. If a creature is hoisted 200 feet up to the top of canopy by this effect, it is instantly decapitated.

ROOTS

Hit Points 266 (13d20 + 130)
Initiative Count 5

TRAITS

Position. The roots of the executioner are directly below the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 50 feet wide, 50 feet long, and 20 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Blood Pond. The executioner causes a pond of cursed water to appear in a 20-foot square on the ground within 300 feet of it. Creatures in the area have disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws. The pond lasts for 1 hour before vanishing.

Drain Magic. The executioner drains magic from a 30-foot cube centered on a point it can see. Spells and magical effects in the area with a duration greater than instantaneous have their durations halved (minimum of 1 round).

TOWERING TRUNK

Hit Points 348 (17d20 + 170)
Initiative Count 15

TRAITS

Cacophony of the Condemned. The faces covering the trunk emit a continuous, howling wail. If a creature starts its turn within 1 mile of the executioner and can hear the wailing, the executioner can force the creature to succeed on a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw or be drawn toward the executioner. On each of its turns, an affected creature must move its speed toward the executioner (following the sound of the wailing) by the safest possible route. This effect ends if the creatures takes damage from the executioner, touches it, or becomes unable to hear the wailing.

A creature that isn't surprised can cover its ears to gain advantage on the saving throw at the start of its turn. If it does so, until the end of its next turn it has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to hear other creatures, and it cannot use any limbs that are covering its ears for anything else. If it uncovers its ears in the meantime, it must immediately attempt the saving throw.

Position. The towering trunk of the executioner is at least 70 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 50 feet wide, 50 feet long, and 90 feet tall.

ACTIONS

Nourish. A section of the executioner's choice regains 35 (10d6) hit points.

Visions of Atrocity (Recharge 5–6). The executioner emits a magical pulse in a 300-foot-radius sphere. Enemy creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw or experience visions of barbaric atrocities for 1 minute. While experiencing these visions, a creature considers all other creatures its enemies and cannot be considered an ally by other creatures.

CORE

Hit Points 553 (27d20 + 270)
Initiative Count 10

TRAITS

Position. The core of the executioner is at least 20 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 50 feet wide, 50 feet long, and 50 feet tall.

Unified Being. At the start of each of the core's turns it can choose to lose up to 150 hit points and transfer them to its other sections. The branches and the roots can each regain hit points, with the executioner dividing the total lost by the core among these sections.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The executioner makes one attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 75 (10d12 + 10) piercing damage. If the target is a Gargantuan or smaller creature that occupies a 20-foot space or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by the executioner. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, has total cover against attacks and effects outside the executioner, and takes 55 (10d10) poison damage at the start of each of its turns.

If the executioner takes 50 or more damage on a single turn from a creature inside it, the executioner must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or spit out all swallowed creatures, who fall prone in a space within 20 feet of the executioner. If the executioner dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained and can escape from the corpse using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Necrotic Gaze. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +16 to hit, range 500 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or take necrotic damage equal to half its hit point maximum (rounded down), or a quarter of its hit point maximum (rounded down) on a success.

Maleophages

Microscopic in size and capable of infiltrating a creature's physical form in mere seconds, these living diseases are so potent they can topple a titan. Called maleophages by those unlucky enough to encounter them, these sentient plagues assault the living where they are most vulnerable. They infect the body, mind, and even soul with their corrosive presence, tearing even the most stalwart adventurer apart from the inside. Maleophages are inherently evil, taking a perverse glee in the suffering their symptoms inflict. All attempts to purge the "living plagues" from the world have utterly failed. Only the most daring and powerful can put an end to a maleophage infection. All it takes is for one infected individual to escape quarantine for the threat to rise anew, a threat made all the more likely by a maleophages' cruel intelligence.

TWISTING HATE

This strain of maleophage warps the mind of its host, urging the afflicted on toward violence against former friends. It corrupts the flesh of the host as well, amplifying wounds and setting bones in horribly broken positions. Those who suffer from twisting hate become hideously deformed, their bodies contorted into excruciating angles. These oozes are cruel in the extreme, using the agonized screams of its victims to draw more potential hosts into range. Unless threatened, a twisting hate kills slowly, affording its host time to seek help and comprehend its fate.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about the twisting hate with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) ability check.

TWISTING FATE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
13	One of the weakest maleophages, twisting hate is one of a variety of microscopic infectious oozes that enters the body of a humanoid host and drives it mad with rage. It can only be forced out by dealing damage to the host.
17	Twisting hates toy with the bodies of their hosts—they can compel them to attack their allies, force a line of acid to spew from their throats, or just poison the hosts' bodies until they give out. They also warp the flesh of the afflicted, preventing them from healing from damage they have suffered.
21	Spells and other effects that remove diseases are effective against a maleophage but don't cure it outright. Instead, they weaken it without harming the host, and repeated applications will eventually kill the ooze. The twisting hate's warping of the host's flesh can be countered with *greater restoration*, negating some of the harm it does.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Four species of maleophage have been catalogued, each unique in the way it corrupts and invades the body. Magical countermeasures against disease are only partially effective against them, and massively increased doses are recommended. Some of these microscopic oozes defy detection, lying dormant until they suddenly liquify their host from the inside. Furthermore, the self-sustaining nature of the maleophages allows them to survive beyond the death of their hosts, preventing the amelioration of symptoms one normally sees in a contagion. You see, normally a disease that kills its host too quickly has no chance to spread, while those strains which can survive even postmortem are often the deadliest and most terrifying of all.

The Twisting Hate

The variety of maleophage called twisting hate is so named for its ability to inspire hatred in the thoughts of its host, turning friend to foe in an instant. As with all maleophages, it is best expunged through liberal application of divine magics. Unfortunately, a twisting hate is nigh impossible to locate until it has infected a host, forcing those who seek its destruction to experience excruciating agony. I once saw Sister Solaria purge a maleophage with a single word, but she is...convincing. When she shouted, "Put that down!" in the library, I almost dropped my journal before remembering she had her grandchildren that day and the admonition was likely directed at them.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Barbarians, Clerics, Constitution (High), Disease (Protection from), Paladins, Specific Spells (*greater restoration*)

Foils: Bards, Damage (Physical), Disabling, Sorcerers, Warlocks, Wizards



TACTICS

Twisting hate is easy to use in an encounter, but how you start the fight merits some consideration. The ooze doesn't need to use an action to infect a creature, but once it does, you should roll for initiative. When picking a host, look for powerful melee characters who aren't necessarily tough, like rogues and other Dexterity-based fighters. The infected creature attempts a Constitution saving throw each turn to try to expel the ooze, and the ooze starts attacking from within immediately. You don't need to explain exactly what is going on—you should detail all game effects to the player of the infected character, but they won't immediately know the source unless they're familiar with maleophages.

Most of the damage the party will do to the twisting hate will be by damaging the host or casting spells that remove disease. Remember the rules for the Damage Transfer trait, and split the damage before calculating resistance for both the host and the twisting hate.

On the twisting hate's turns, use Acid Vomit whenever it is available and Delirium on all other turns. Toxic Shock is there for turns during which none of the host's allies are in range of a melee attack from Delirium. Don't forget to apply the effects of Fleshwarping each time the host takes damage.

WHAT IS "FLESH-AND-BLOOD"?

You will see the phrase "a flesh-and-blood creature" throughout this chapter. For purposes of game effects, flesh-and-blood creatures include the following types: aberrations, beasts, celestials, dragons, fey, fiends, giants, humanoids, and monstrosities. The following types are not considered flesh-and-blood creatures: constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead.

Easier Tactics – Use Delirium every turn, and only use Acid Vomit once during the fight. Focus on using Delirium to move around and make fewer attacks overall. You can even use the movement from Delirium to keep the host and allies separated, potentially damaging the twisting hate if the afflicted character succeeds on the Constitution saving throw at the start of each turn.

Harder Tactics – Use Toxic Shock repeatedly to weaken the host. Each use of the ability threatens to activate Fleshwarping and reduce the host's hit point maximum, and it limits the rest of the party's ability to do damage to the twisting hate by attacking the host—unless they're fine with killing their friend, of course. Once the host has been killed, move onto the next most vulnerable until nothing is left standing.

PLOT HOOKS

Wanderer's Lament. The party encounters a traveling beggar who seems to have lost his mind. He is infected by a twisting hate, and the ooze bides its time until the beggar finally succeeds on his saving throw against it and forces it out, allowing it to leap into a worthier host.

Production Costs. Someone is mass-producing the powerful healing concoction known as a *poultice of mending*, which can only come from those who have survived contact with a twisting hate maleophage. Could this someone be deliberately infecting victims, or has a less vile method been found?

Overconfidence. A cadre of paladins sent to resolve an epidemic of some mundane disease in a quarantined section of town instead goes on a murderous rampage through the district, spurred to action by a twisting hate.

TREASURE

The twisting hate is much too small to carry any treasure or be feasibly harvested for components. But a creature that is infected by a twisting hate and survives occasionally develops peculiar deposits of crystalized ooze on its skeletal structure. They are benign and can remain for the rest of the creature's life without effect, but they are almost impossible to remove, requiring a DC 25 Wisdom (Medicine) check to perform the surgery without killing the creature. If properly extracted and prepared, these deposits can be used to create a *poultice of mending*.

TWISTING HATE

Tiny ooze, chaotic evil

Armor Class 5
Hit Points 161 (19d4 + 114)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	1 (-5)	22 (+6)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +8, Cha -1
Damage Immunities poison
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, grappled, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 14
Languages understands Common but cannot speak
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

TRAITS

Damage Transfer. When anything other than the twisting hate deals damage to the infected creature, the twisting hate takes half the damage dealt to the infected creature, and the infected creature takes the other half (before damage resistances and immunities are applied).

Fleshwarping. When an infected creature takes damage, its flesh melts and warps, causing extreme pain. The creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw, with a DC equal to 10 plus half the damage dealt (rounded down). On a failure, the creature's hit point maximum is reduced to its current hit points. This effect lasts until the creature is no longer infected.

Sentient Disease. The twisting hate is a microscopic, sentient disease. It cannot be targeted and can only be harmed when infecting a creature. While not within a host, the twisting hate can infect any flesh-and-blood creature that comes within 30 feet of it. If the host dies, the twisting hate can infect a new creature. Creatures immune to disease can still be infected by it but have advantage on saving throws against it. If an infected creature is affected by a spell or effect that would remove a disease, the twisting hate remains in the creature but loses 25 hit points. It may only infect a single creature at a time, and when the ooze is slain, the infected creature is cured of the disease.

Additionally, at the start of each of its turns, an infected creature can attempt a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the twisting hate leaves the infected creature and infects a new flesh-and-blood creature within 30 feet. If there are no uninfected flesh-and-blood creatures within 30 feet, it remains in its host but loses 25 hit points.

ACTIONS

Acid Vomit (Recharge 5–6). The twisting hate forces the creature it is infecting to vomit a 30-foot-long line of acid that is 5 feet wide in a direction of the twisting hate's choice. Creatures in the line must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 45 (10d8) acid damage, or half as much on a success.

Delirium. The creature the twisting hate is infecting must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be unable to take actions until the end of its next turn. Instead, the twisting hate can force the creature to use its action to make a single weapon attack or move according to the twisting hate's desires.

Toxic Shock. The creature the twisting hate is infecting takes 28 (8d6) poison damage.

Poultice of Mending

Wondrous item, very rare

This thick, lime-colored paste has flecks of green crystal within it. It can be spread across a creature as part of a 1-hour process that, when completed, bestows the effects of the *greater restoration* and *regenerate* spells. The poultice replicates the effects of the spells nonmagically. There is only enough paste for a single application.

ECOLOGY

Most commonly found in forests near groups of humanoids, a twisting hate is just sentient enough to be patient. It lurks in the bodies of weaker creatures, waiting until it finds a powerful creature to corrupt and bring under its sway. After killing everything nearby, it turns dormant, as it is incapable of moving without a host body to carry it. It prefers highly trafficked areas where a new host is never far away. While sentient, a twisting hate is beyond reason or compassion. Only those who possess telepathy have engaged a twisting hate in conversation, which is reported to only result in a ceaseless tide of insults, threats, and general vitriol from the angry disease. Powerful undead and evil constructs are known to make use of these creatures, unleashing them as devastating biological weapons against the living.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

If a twisting hate infects a flesh-and-blood creature for 24 hours, the region within 1 mile of the creature (often referred to as "patient zero") becomes contaminated by the disease, creating the following effects.

- When a flesh-and-blood creature recovers hit points, it instead recovers half as many hit points.
- The joints and bones of flesh-and-blood creatures constantly ache as though they were under continuous stress and tension.

If a twisting hate changes hosts or is slain, these effects fade after 24 hours.

DEATH WRACK

A silent killer that strikes without warning, death wrack is the subtlest of the maleophages. It festers, growing and growing until it reveals itself in an explosion of toxins that is instantly lethal to most creatures. It is surprisingly intelligent and acts with malignant purpose, seeking out individuals in positions of influence and power and hiding within them until a crucial moment when it can strike them dead. A death wrack is almost impossible to identify until after it has struck, its victims showing no outward symptoms until it is too late. Those who suffer an attack from death wrack experience excruciating pain in their chests before collapsing. To the untrained eye, it can appear to be a common heart attack, though experienced healers are quick to deduce a supernatural cause. It takes great skill in medicine to exterminate death wrack, whose intelligence makes it all the more difficult to pin down.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about the death wrack with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) ability check.

DEATH WRACK LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Infection by death wrack passes unnoticed under all but the closest scrutiny, and it builds up toxins in the body until they reach a critical point. More than one adventurer has gone from feeling as healthy as a horse to keeled over dead in mere seconds from this maleophage.
19	Once the death wrack has revealed itself, it begins to corrode its host from the inside with potent acids. The ooze can prevent its host body from being healed, but doing so means the ooze isn't actively inflicting harm.
23	Spells and other effects that remove diseases are effective against a maleophage but don't cure it outright. Instead they weaken it without harming the host, and repeated applications will eventually kill the ooze. Death wrack is most dangerous if undetected—repeated medical examinations while in areas known to harbor this ooze will serve as effective preventative medicine.

The Death Wrack

When a healthy, influential individual drops dead without warning at a critical junction, one should suspect an infection of death wrack. The ooze with a flair for the dramatic, death wrack loves liquifying the organs of a sovereign on the cusp of a wholesome announcement, like the end of a war, sparking numerous accusations of assassination and other such foul play. Fortunately, the ooze won't allow itself to actually be weaponized. Every rogue agent that has attempted to do so has caught the sickness themselves and died a few feet from their targets. Ironic and well deserved, I say.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Acid (Protection from), Barbarians, Constitution (High), Disease (Protection from), Fighters, Monks, Necrotic (Protection from)

Foils: Bards, Clerics, Druids, Hit Points (Low), Spells (Healing)

TACTICS

Death wrack is an ambitious disease. It picks the biggest, toughest-looking creature it can perceive to infect and then spends its turns taking the Festering Corruption action until it maximizes the damage of its next attack. Then it uses Wrack, and that's when combat begins, usually granting the ooze surprise in the process. Unless the party knows to look for death wrack, they won't know anything is amiss until one of their group attempts a Constitution saving throw, and even then, they aren't automatically aware of the source. If the infected creature succeeds on its saving throw and death wrack moves to another creature, it continues using Wrack to inflict damage on its new host.

Easier Tactics – Don't build Festering Corruption up to its maximum potential—take it to 15d8 bonus damage and then use Wrack. It's still a hard hit, but it's less likely to drop a character to the ground outright. Make sure the death wrack strikes at a moment when the party can focus exclusively on it as opposed to the middle of a brutal encounter.

Harder Tactics – The death wrack should strike in the middle of an encounter, making a bad situation worse. When the death wrack infects a new creature, it starts using Festering Corruption again. Because it's in a new creature, it is hidden once more, and the party won't know which character it has moved to until they succeed on a Wisdom (Medicine) check to locate it. This only works if there are multiple potential characters for it to have moved to, but the party won't immediately know that the death wrack is limited to spreading to creatures within 60 feet.

PLOT HOOKS

Conspiracy. The leader of a large nation coordinates peace talks between warring factions. When the military commanders of these factions are gathered together, one of them falls dead. Accusations of betrayal and a bloody battle soon follow.

Quarantine. The party is in a confined space with a half-dozen strangers. Someone suddenly drops dead from a lethal infection, and it's a race to figure out who is infected so the afflicted can be cured or quarantined.

Patient Killer. One of the party members is infected by death wrack, but the disease doesn't act. It seems to be waiting for something, and it doesn't even resist attempts to cure it. Why is it so passive?

DEATH WRACK

Tiny ooze, chaotic evil

Armor Class 5
Hit Points 218 (23d4 + 161)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	1 (-5)	24 (+7)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +11, Int +5, Wis +8
Skills Deception +10
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, grappled, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 14
Languages understands Common but cannot speak
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Damage Transfer. When anything other than the death wrack deals damage to the infected creature, the death wrack takes half the damage dealt to the infected creature, and the infected creature takes the other half (before damage resistances and immunities are applied).

Hidden Malady. The death wrack's effects occur inside the body of an infected creature and are invisible. As an action, a creature can attempt a DC 19 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check, detecting the death wrack on a success. Unless discovered in this manner or until it attacks, the death wrack is considered hidden while infecting a creature.

Sentient Disease. The death wrack is a microscopic, sentient disease. It cannot be targeted and can only be harmed when infecting a creature. While not within a host, the death wrack can infect any flesh-and-blood creature that comes within 60 feet of it. If the host dies, the death wrack can infect a new creature. Creatures immune to disease can still be infected by it but have advantage on saving throws against it. If an infected creature is affected by a spell or effect that would remove a disease, the death wrack remains in the creature but loses 30 hit points. It may only infect a single creature at a time, and when the ooze is slain, the infected creature is cured of the disease.

Additionally, if the death wrack is not hidden, at the start of each of its turns an infected creature aware of the disease can attempt a DC 19 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the death wrack leaves the infected creature and infects a new flesh-and-blood creature within 60 feet. If there are no uninfected flesh-and-blood creatures within 60 feet, the death wrack remains in its host but loses 30 hit points.

ACTIONS

Festering Corruption. When the death wrack next deals damage, it deals an additional 22 (5d8) necrotic damage. If it uses this ability again, the extra damage increases by an additional 22 (5d8), to a maximum of an extra 135 (30d8) necrotic damage. Once the death wrack deals damage or changes hosts, this extra damage is lost.

Healing Suppression. Until the end of the infected creature's next turn, it cannot regain hit points.

Wrack. The death wrack corrodes the organs of the creature it is infecting. The creature must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 27 (5d10) acid damage. If the creature fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it instead takes 55 (10d10) acid damage.

TREASURE

The flesh of creatures killed by death wrack can, in sufficient quantities, be distilled into a *maleophage panacea*, a potion that acts as a vaccine against most varieties of the sentient oozes. The number of deceased victims required to produce this potion makes it impractical for large-scale use, and the abhorrent nature of it precludes most from making it all. The potion can be sold for 6,000 gp to anyone with deep pockets and a fear of infection by a maleophage.

Maleophage Panacea

Potion, very rare

This tiny bottle is filled with a color-shifting liquid that changes from purple to green to yellow and back again. A creature that drinks the liquid cannot be infected by nonmagical diseases or maleophages for 48 hours. When the duration ends, the creature immediately falls unconscious for 10 minutes as its body recovers from its immune system's hyperactivity.

ECOLOGY

Death wrack grows near centers of social and political power, like sewer systems beneath massive cities, in the deep caves of a dwarven hold, or high among the treetops of an elven forest city. Something about a locus of decision-making and bureaucracy encourages the growth of this strain of maleophage. Once it matures, it seeks out a host with alacrity. Only once it has found a host does it become a patient hunter, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. The personality of a death wrack can only be described as conniving. They take great satisfaction in killing and will gladly coordinate with other creatures to help fulfill their ambitions. A death wrack may need to kill many targets to reach its penultimate goal, leaving a trail of bodies whose deaths defy explanation.

The Mind Warper

Utterly terrifying. That is how I would describe the mind warper variant of the maleophage. It infects the brain, shifting and changing the thoughts that pass through your psyche. It can control you like a puppet and unleash waves of psychic energy that stagger everyone around it. The thought of losing free will and faculties of reason is abhorrent to my core. Archmagister King once told me a mind warper leaves its victims with, and I quote, "stewed porridge in the brain-box." An evocative description.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Bards, Clerics, Disease (Protection from), Specific Spells (mind blank), Wisdom (High), Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Hit Points (Low), Intelligence (Low), Rogues, Wisdom (Low)

MIND WARPER

Scourge of consciousness, parasite to the intellect. The mind warper amplifies damage dealt to its host and ravages its mind, potentially possessing the afflicted and dictating its every move. Those who survive, even when resuscitated, are often left a shell of their former selves. The scars it leaves are nonphysical, and they run deep. Those who suffer a mind warper infection experience fever and delusion, their perception warped to the whims of the insidious disease. Only when exposed does the mind warper unleash its true power—deadly psychic energy that bites back against any attempts to cure it.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about the mind warper with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) ability check.

MIND WARPER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	A variant of the maleophage is said to inhabit the brain of sentient creatures specifically. Called the mind warper, it can even achieve full possession of its host, a trait some speculate is an offshoot of a parasitic fungus. It assails the psyche, leaving the target's personality in tatters.
20	Mind warpers amplify any damage taken by their hosts, making the blunt-force-removal method problematic. Additionally, the maleophage can emit a stunning psychic screech, disabling everything in a sizeable radius around the host. This ability is rare and happens infrequently.
24	Spells and other effects that remove diseases are effective against a maleophage but don't cure it outright. Instead they weaken it without harming the host, and repeated applications will eventually kill the ooze. Mind warper can possess its host but can't force the host to take actions other than moving. Stay away from hazardous terrain if you suspect mind warper infection.

TACTICS

Mind warper is drawn to the most erudite of potential victims. Its telepathy allows it to listen to surface thoughts, and it fixates on anyone it perceives has complex and interesting ideas. Once it has infected a host, it immediately uses Possession. This both stops the host from helping itself and allows the mind warper to run the host body into whatever hazards are nearby. On subsequent turns, use Mind Spike until the mind warper is reduced to fewer than half of its hit point maximum. Then use Psychic Scream on its next turn. Unlike most maleophages, the mind warper moves to a new host when the current one is reduced to 0 hit points rather than lingering until the host dies. This allows it to inflict its Brain Damage ability on creatures more quickly, potentially debilitating multiple party members.

More than most maleophages, a mind warper infection benefits from some allies. The ooze itself lacks any powerfully damaging abilities and can't even use its Vulnerable Psyche ability without another creature to deal non-psychic damage to the host. Make sure it doesn't fight alone.

Non-sentient creatures are fitting allies, but sentient creatures can be interesting as well, because the mind warper might decide one of them makes a good snack.

Easier Tactics – Use Possession early on, but don't make full use of the creature's ability to hurt itself. Consider having it run in circles for a turn or two to simulate the mind warper learning to control a new host body. Then use Mind Spike every other turn, and don't use Psychic Scream at all.

Harder Tactics – Start the fight with Psychic Scream. Possession is only valuable if there are allies from whom to provoke opportunity attacks or terrain features into which to toss the host body. If those aren't present, it's hard to make the mind warper truly dangerous. Alternatively, if the mind warper is able to possess a target without being noticed, it can slowly betray the victim's compatriots, emulating a gradual descent into insanity.

PLOT HOOKS

Crazier Than Usual. A once-powerful wizard is now trekking across the land, periodically emitting a telepathic screech that stuns everyone nearby. When approached, the wizard raves about voices in her head and a mysterious plague that will soon overwhelm the world.

"Haunted". An ancient and abandoned library holds knowledge the party needs, but it is said that anyone who steps inside has their brains eaten by ghosts! It's actually a mind warper infestation, but to the untrained eye, no one can tell the difference.

Bioweapon. The party comes across a small capsule that appears empty. It is tightly sealed and could be fitted to an arrow or crossbow bolt. Inside is a mind warper, ready to be weaponized.

MIND WARPER

Tiny ooze, chaotic evil

Armor Class 5
Hit Points 242 (27d4 + 175)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	1 (-5)	25 (+7)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +12, Wis +10, Cha +7
Skills Insight +10, Persuasion +12
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, grappled, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 90 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 15
Languages telepathy 90 ft.
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Brain Damage. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by the mind warper has its brain permanently damaged: the target's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores become 1 and the creature can't cast spells, activate magic items, understand language, or communicate in any intelligible way.

This effect can only be ended by a *greater restoration*, *heal*, or *wish* spell.

Damage Transfer. When anything other than the mind warper deals damage to the infected creature, the mind warper takes half the damage dealt to the infected creature, and the infected creature takes the other half (before damage resistances and immunities are applied).

Sentient Disease. The mind warper is a microscopic, sentient disease. It cannot be targeted and can only be harmed when infecting a creature. While not within a host, the mind warper can infect any creature with an Intelligence of 4 or higher that comes within 90 feet of it. If the host is reduced to 0 hit points, the mind warper can infect a new creature in this manner. Creatures immune to disease can still be infected by the mind warper but have advantage on saving throws against it. If an infected creature is affected by a spell or effect that would remove a disease, the mind warper remains in the creature but loses 35 hit points. It may only infect a single creature at a time, and when the ooze is slain, the infected creature is cured of the disease.

Additionally, at the start of each of its turns, an infected creature can attempt a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, the mind warper leaves the infected creature and infects a new creature with an Intelligence of 4 or higher within 90 feet. If there are no such creatures in range, the mind warper remains in its host but loses 35 hit points.

Vulnerable Psyche. When an infected creature takes damage other than psychic damage, it takes additional psychic damage equal to the damage taken. This additional damage is not split with the mind warper via the Damage Transfer feature.

ACTIONS

Mind Spike. *Melee Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature infected by the maleophage. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) psychic damage.

Possession (Recharge 5–6). The mind warper forces the creature it is infecting to attempt a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become possessed by the ooze. The target becomes incapacitated and loses control of its body, and the mind warper controls the body without depriving the target of awareness.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the mind warper ends the possession as a bonus action, or the mind warper no longer infects the creature.

Psychic Scream (1/Short Rest). The mind warper unleashes a psychic wave of agony in a 60-foot radius centered on the creature it is infecting. Each creature other than the infected creature must succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. An affected creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns to end the effect.

TREASURE

Creatures that have their psyches shattered by a mind warper can be healed with powerful magic, or their brains can be extracted and mummified via a moisture extraction and preservation process that creates an extremely gruesome charm, a *haruspex ward*, typically worn as an amulet. Creating such an item is an evil act, and wearing it is not well received in any sort of polite society.

Haruspex Ward

Wondrous item, very rare

This gruesome, shriveled brain is attached to a thin chain that can be worn around the neck. While wearing it, you have immunity to psychic damage. Each time you are subjected to an effect that deals psychic damage, record the amount you would have taken as a cumulative total. Once the haruspex ward has prevented 75 psychic damage, the shriveled brain crumbles to dust and is destroyed.

ECOLOGY

Mind warper maleophages inhabit places of higher learning. They grow in the dusty cracks and crevices of the greatest libraries, feeding off magical residue from careless spellcasting and, some speculate, learning from the books they consume. They favor challenging targets with grand intellects, perhaps deriving some kind of satisfaction from overcoming a resilient mind. While sadistic, mind warpers are far from stupid. Creatures they possess can be used as transportation and as a tool, allowing the disease to spread to realms far and wide. A mind warper is not subtle, however, and any possessed individuals will quickly attract attention. More than one town crazy has proven to be a tragic victim of a mind warper, patiently waiting for just the right victim to come along. In conversation mind warpers are demanding and psychotic, shifting between emotional states at a disturbing pace. Those who survive the experience describe it as a being of pure spite, screaming into one's brain at headache-inducing volumes.

The Soul Rot

Though less personally affrontive than the mind warper, there's no denying that soul rot is the most potent, deadly, and alarming of the maleophage strains. Its victims rise immediately as aggressive undead, pitiable reflections of the beings they once were. The soul rot itself can divide in two with disturbing frequency, forcing those who oppose its outbreaks to move quickly. It can even lie dormant for extended periods, deceiving those who would cure it into believing they succeeded. Paranoia will serve you well—don't stop treatment until there is zero possibility of the infection remaining. And then keep going a little beyond that.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Lurker

Favors: Clerics, Disease (Protection from), Druids, Necrotic (Protection from), Paladins

Foils: Barbarians, Damage (Physical), Fighters, Rogues, Wisdom (Low)

SOUL ROT

The worst of the worst, the soul rot transcends the traditional targets of a disease to infect the very essence of life. It wears away the spirit of a creature, gnawing at the soul like a starving animal. When it has consumed every last vestige of a being, the empty husk that remains becomes an avatar of hatred and rage. These husks stagger ever forward, hungry only to kill while the maleophage moves on to its next victim. Alone, an outbreak of soul rot can annihilate a metropolis, with only the most extreme measures having any success against containing the infection. The disease is evil to core and opposed at every opportunity by those who value life.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about the soul rot with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) ability check.

SOUL ROT LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Legends speak of a disease so toxic and so vile that it eats the soul right out of your body, leaving you a shambling husk. The necrotic influence of this maleophage is not to be underestimated and should be treated as the most drastic kind of emergency.
22	Soul rot is incredibly dangerous. Infected creatures are vulnerable to all forms of damage. If they are knocked unconscious, the soul rot kills them in an instant and reanimates their bodies before anything can be done. The maleophage is then able to infect a new host.
27	Soul rot can enter a state of dormancy in which it appears to have been cured. Detecting it requires impressive medical acumen. Furthermore, the maleophage can divide into two identical oozes, each of which can infect a different creature.

TACTICS

Soul rot doesn't care whom it infects, only what they will become when the disease has run its course. It should use Feed on its turn to weaken the host, trying to take the afflicted down to 0 hit points to create a husk. Contaminate is best used if a sizeable group is present to deal damage to

all of them, but it doesn't play nicely with any allied creatures working with the maleophage. If the ooze changes hosts while low on hit points (100 or fewer), it uses Dormancy to hide its presence, attempting to pass unnoticed and make the party believe they have won.

Easier Tactics – Use Contaminate even with a small group, spreading the damage among the party. Use Feed occasionally, and don't use Mitosis ever—it's too dangerous. The other important change is not adding too many allies alongside the maleophage, as the Vulnerability trait causes the host to be extremely susceptible to attacks from other creatures.

Harder Tactics – Start with Mitosis on the first round. Then have both soul rots use Contaminate in overlapping areas, dealing a ton of damage to the party. If the areas don't overlap, or if Contaminate won't hit more than two characters, keep using Feed to heal the soul rot. You want to pick the most fragile characters to infect, trying to create as many husks as you can as quickly as possible. If you are feeling particularly cruel, you can have several husks from previous victims participate in the battle, potentially causing the party to attribute the soul rot's effects to the husks instead.

PLOT HOOKS

Undead Outbreak. A wave of undead bursts out of the fighters guild, crazed husks of the former members. Then the same thing starts to happen at the wizards guild, the thieves guild, and many other institutions. Public panic is at a fever pitch by the time the characters arrive.

Unusual Suspects. Soul rot maleophages are said to be repositories of religious knowledge, but extracting them is a treacherous affair. Unfortunately for the party, there's a question that needs answering, and interrogating a sentient disease might be the only way to get that answer.

Mission Impossible. The party needs to recover an item from a husk-infested ancient city, but getting in and out in one piece requires finding a way to disguise the fact they all have souls. It's a new kind of stealth that might require some magic with a high price.

TREASURE

The soul rot is a subject of morbid fascination for spellcasters, for the act of contaminating and consuming a soul is as profane an act as it is magical. In extreme cases, evil wielders of magic who willingly subject themselves to the horrors of soul rot receive a dark gift. Sensing the malevolence within the subject, the maleophage teaches the aspiring creature a powerfully evil spell: *soulflayer*. The spellcaster must have a spell slot of the spell's level or higher to learn *soulflayer*, which is added to the caster's known spells and considered a class spell for that character.

New Spell – Soulflayer

This spell is a class spell for warlocks and wizards.

Soulflayer

8th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 ft.
Components: V, S, M (a heart that was taken from a living creature)
Duration: Instantaneous

Corrosive strands of necrotic energy tear apart the soul of a creature of your choice that you are aware of within range. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take necrotic damage equal to half its hit point maximum (rounded down), or half as much on a success. A creature reduced to 0 hit points or killed by this damage has its soul permanently scarred, gaining the following flaw.

Flaw — Traumatized: I am damaged, unable to be whole. If I suffer another grievous injury, I may break.

ECOLOGY

Soul rot festers in desecrated and necrotic areas. Sites of great and terrible necromancy, haunted catacombs, and anywhere a lich resides are likely habitants for soul rot. It lacks the specific schemes of some maleophages and exists only to consume souls. It cares nothing for soulless creatures, unless of course they get in the way of its next victim. Soul rot is deadly to any being still in possession of a soul, leaving only a handful of creatures immune to its deadly effects. Its power intrigues all evil beings, whose dark dreams are filled with fantasies about harnessing soul rot as the ultimate biological weapon. Thankfully no such fate has ever come to pass, though the fascination remains.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region within 1 mile of a soul rot becomes contaminated by the disease, creating the following effects.

- Slain creatures cannot be returned to life.
- Shadows cast by objects and structures have a pair of glowing red eyes.

If a soul rot is slain, these effects fade after 24 hours.

SOUL ROT

Tiny ooze, chaotic evil

Armor Class 5
Hit Points 345 (30d4 + 270)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	1 (-5)	28 (+9)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +15, Int +9, Wis +12
Skills Insight +12, Religion +13
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, grappled, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 16
Languages understands all languages but cannot speak
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Damage Transfer. When anything other than the soul rot deals damage to the infected creature, the soul rot takes half the damage dealt to the infected creature, and the infected creature takes the other half (before damage resistances and immunities are applied).

Sentient Disease. The soul rot is a microscopic, sentient disease. It cannot be targeted and can only be harmed when infecting a creature. While not within a host, the soul rot can infect any creature with a soul that comes within 120 feet of it. If the host is reduced to 0 hit points, the soul rot can infect a new creature. Creatures immune to disease can still be infected by soul rot but have advantage on saving throws against it. If an infected creature is affected by a spell or effect that would remove a disease, the soul rot remains in the creature but loses 40 hit points. It may only infect a single creature at a time, and when the ooze is slain, the infected creature is cured of the disease.

Additionally, at the start of each of its turns, an infected creature can attempt a DC 23 Constitution saving throw. On a success, the soul rot leaves the infected creature and infects a new creature with a soul within 120 feet. If there are no uninfected creatures with a soul within 120 feet of the soul rot, it remains in its host but loses 40 hit points.

Vile Husk. A creature reduced to 0 hit points while infected by the soul rot dies instantly as its soul decays. A creature killed in this way can only be restored to life by *true resurrection* or more powerful magic. However, the body of the creature lives on as a husk. Its creature type changes to undead, its alignment changes to chaotic evil, it becomes immune to necrotic damage, and it regains all its hit points. The husk is a hateful echo of the original creature, with no other purpose than to kill and destroy. When this effect occurs, the soul rot may immediately infect a creature with a soul within 120 feet. If there are no creatures with a soul to infect, the soul rot remains within the husk but can take no actions until a creature eligible for infection comes within range.

Vulnerability. A creature infected by the soul rot is vulnerable to all damage. A creature that has resistance to any types of damage loses those resistances but does not become vulnerable to that damage type. Immunities to damage are retained. Additionally, it has disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks and cannot gain advantage.

ACTIONS

Contaminate. At the start of the infected creature's next turn, all uninfected creatures within 30 feet of it take 27 (6d8) necrotic damage.

Dormancy. The soul rot enters a period of dormancy for 1 year. During this time, it cannot affect other creatures or take actions. If the soul rot is infecting a creature, it is undetectable unless a creature succeeds on a DC 23 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check. If the soul rot takes damage, it can choose to immediately end its dormancy.

Feed. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature infected by the maleophage. *Hit:* 28 (4d10 + 6) necrotic damage, and the soul rot regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt.

Mitosis (Recharge 1 Year). The soul rot loses half its current hit points and splits into two new oozes. Each new ooze has hit points equal to half the original ooze's rounded down, but both have the same hit point maximum as the original ooze. One of the new oozes remains in the current host; the other one emerges from the host and can infect a new creature.

Metallic Oozes

While all oozes are bizarre entities, few of the squishy creatures can approach the fantastical weirdness of the metallic oozes. Resembling liquid metal and possessing an animalistic cunning, these nearly mindless entities are rightly feared for their deadly properties and unrelenting predations. Whether these ferocious creatures were created through artificial means or some strange confluence of magic, none can say. Some believe the creatures to be an evolutionary response to the ever-increasing presence of adventurers, who often come equipped with powerful metal weaponry enhanced by deadly magic. Regardless of their origin, the creature's influence over metal is terrifying to any who rely upon armor, blades, or magical trinkets. Many an adventurer has been left destitute after a chance encounter with a metallic ooze, and few are willing to risk losing everything unless they are extraordinarily well compensated.

GALLIUM GOO

A large ooze of a milky white complexion, a gallium goo takes its name from the fluid metal known to corrode other metals through direct contact. Incredibly caustic to all but the most powerful magical metal objects, gallium goo gain sustenance by bonding their bodies with metal they encounter, making it brittle and unusable. Curiously, this process seems to injure the ooze, and more than one gallium goo has been defeated by allowing it to eat itself to death. This unusual behavior flies in the face of all evolutionary theory, giving credence to the idea that these creatures are in fact artificial beings created by an unknown intelligence. Nevertheless, gallium goo have thrived in the wild, and will overpower any living creatures that get between them and a tasty metallic morsel.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a Gallium Goo with a successful Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

GALLIUM GOO LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	A gallium goo can smell refined metals at a considerable distance, even through solid objects. It will always seek out the nearest source of refined metals, unless it detects magically enchanted metal, which it prefers above all others.
19	Contact between a gallium goo and any metal is incredibly destructive. While it is possible to repair objects destroyed by the goo, its often better to just replace them entirely. The ooze can move deceptively fast, leaping a considerable distance in pursuit of its next meal.
23	Gallium goo are very durable, with even magic failing to damage them efficiently. The creatures can quickly recover from any injury and must be dispatched quickly before they can do too much damage.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Few things in this world make me more thankful to be a spellcaster than the dreaded metallic oozes. Whilst I (and my gear) hold little interest to the powerful, but simpleminded creatures, my more martially inclined companions have a comically extreme response at the thought of encountering one. To this day, Masako still mourns the loss of her favorite axe to a gallium goo, the only time I've ever known her to be melancholy rather than angry. These creatures hunt for refined metals with intense singlemindedness, squeezing through tiny openings and overpowering all resistance. I have witnessed firsthand their preference for magical items, watching as a slag slime engulfed an enchanted suit of armor in favor of far more convenient meals. My best recommendation to those who face these beings; throw all the metal you have at them and run. Best case scenario, the ooze gets full before you run out of swords.

The Gallium Goo

I gasped aloud when beholding the effects of this ooze's touch upon metal. A master crafted blade of solid adamantine was reduced to useless scrap in seconds, with the ooze's own body being damaged by the extreme nature of the reaction. What was truly remarkable was that the type of metals the ooze could affect were irrelevant. From magical mithril to polished bronze, all were equal before the creature's corrosive might. Thankfully, the creatures are easily baited and tricked. We managed to trap the goo within a cage of magical force, with only a pile of steel as bait. I have asked that the creature be transported to a safe location where it can do no harm, but I doubt the dwarves whose forges it consumed will be charitable in their judgements.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Bards, Druids, Monks, Spellcasters,

Foils: Fighters, Melee, Metal, Rangers, Rogues, Strength (Low)



TACTICS

A gallium goo is as dumb as a rock but possesses an animalistic cunning that gives it some sense of combat tactics. The ooze wanders aimlessly until it smells refined metal, at which point it moves rapidly towards the source. Anything that the ooze cannot circumvent or that proves harmful is mercilessly destroyed before continuing toward the "food". Using its Slingshot action, the goo can launch itself at distant targets, and possesses strong enough survival instincts to use its Regenerate action when in mortal danger.

Easier Tactics — The goo targets gear, rather than individuals, picking a piece of equipment and pursuing it with single-minded determination. It uses its Diffusing Touch on this target almost exclusively, until it has destroyed all metal upon the target. Once it has fed, it immediately moves on to a new food source, regardless of the condition the original target is in.

Harder Tactics – The goo launches itself between any foes carrying metal, making sure to subject as many objects as possible to its Diffusing Touch. Once it has destroyed the majority of objects within range, it focuses on recovering its Hit Points with its Regenerate action while slaughtering any creatures foolish enough to attack it.

PLOT HOOKS

Environmental Extremists. A conclave of druids have weaponized several gallium goo, unleashing the creatures upon local mining operations. Several miners have been brutally maimed in the assaults, and the cost of the lost equipment is staggering. A diplomatic solution is sought in lieu of tackling the oozes directly, but things may yet come to blows.

Obstacle Course. A magical sword within a ruined keep has drawn swarms of gallium goo to the ancient ruins. While the creatures seem unable to reach the powerful weapon, none have dared to recover the blade for fear of the oozes. How one could acquire such a treasure without the use of metal, and then escape with it, is a challenge for only the most cunning of adventurers.

Night at the Museum. An ancient stone petroglyph housed an imprisoned gallium goo. Now the ooze is loose inside a museum full of priceless antiquities. Someone needs to stop the oozes destructive rampage before too many relics are lost!

TREASURE

With no Intelligence or need to hoard treasure, gallium goo never intentionally keep anything valuable. The areas they frequent however are often filled with treasures that are composed of nonmetal materials, often left behind in the rush to flee from the invading ooze. Additionally, the liquid remains of a slain gallium goo can be harvested and preserved with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Alchemist Tools) check. A successful check harvests enough of the remains to create three gallium bombs, the details of which are found below. On a failure, the remains putrefy and become no longer suitable for harvest.

Gallium Bomb. As an action, you can splash the contents of this vial onto on object or creature within 5 feet of you or throw the vial up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. In either case, make a ranged attack against a creature or object, treating the bomb as an improvised weapon. Medium or smaller metal objects hit by this attack or being worn or carried by a creature hit by this attack are broken, becoming brittle and unusable. Magical items affected by the bomb instead take damage equal to half its maximum hit points.

GALLIUM GOO

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 161 (17d10 + 68)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +8, Wis +2
Skills Perception +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from metal weapons
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses metalsense 120 ft. (see traits), blind beyond that radius, passive Perception 16
Languages —
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

TRAITS

Amorphous. The goo can move through a space as narrow as half an inch wide without squeezing.

Diffusing Touch. When the goo touches a metal object or one that contains a significant quantity of metal, it can choose to lose 15 hit points to break the object, making it brittle and unusable. Affected magical objects instead lose half their maximum hit points.

Metalsense. The goo can perceive any metal within 120 ft. through its sense of smell.

Spell Resistance. The goo has resistance to damage from spells and magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The goo makes two pseudopod attacks.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10+5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, the goo may grapple it (escape DC 17).

Regenerate. The goo regains 26 (4d10+4) hit points.

Slingshot. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. When the goo makes this attack, it launches its entire body at the target, landing in the nearest unoccupied space to the target.

ECOLOGY

Subterranean by nature, gallium goo lair deep beneath the earth, searching for veins of pure metal to consume. However, the creatures do not suffer in daylight, and will gladly move toward the surface if lured by the smell of delicious metal. Wherever there are large scale metallurgical operations, there is a risk of drawing gallium goo, as the oozes are attracted to refined metals like moths to a flame. Some cultures have learned to harness gallium goo as guardians and weapons of war, utilizing stone and wooden tools while unleashing the oozes upon those that favor metal.

FERROPHLEGM

A magnetic marvel of nature, the ferrophlegm is a viscous metallic ooze that exhibits astonishing magnetic properties, allowing it to interact with and manipulate metal. Its grey metallic body propels itself forward by generating magnetic fields, a process that completely mystifies scholars and defies all logic. Like all metallic oozes, the ferrophlegm seeks out and consumes metal, preferring those that are more easily subjected to magnetism. The ooze's presence is dramatic, causing metallic objects of considerable size and weight to zoom about at frightening speeds. For this reason, ferrophlegm are the bane of developed societies, generating veritable storms of shrapnel while they feed.

The Ferrophlegm

Magnetism is a poorly understood scientific force, so when I heard of an ooze that could manipulate magnetic fields to miraculous degrees, I assumed some magic must be at work. To my astonishment, the so called "ferrophlegm" could not only use its magnetic powers in areas of antimagic but could generate tremendously powerful magnetic fields on its own accord. For obvious reasons, do not bring any metal object, large or small, near this creature. Elkus spent seven weeks atoning for the loss of his steel holy symbol, a tragic lesson he will not soon forget.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Barbarians, Constitution (High), Fighters, Monks, Range, Strength (High)

Foils: Clerics, Metal, Paladins, Rogues

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a Ferrophlegm with an Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

FERROPHLEGM LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Ferrophlegm possess dangerous magnetic powers that allow them to manipulate metal of all types. Only great physical strength can resist its influence.
10	Those not wearing metal are not safe from a ferrophlegm, which can inject a portion of its own body into other creatures, subjecting them to its magnetic influence. It can even recall these portions to itself, dealing horrific damage to creatures they exit.
24	Ferrophlegm are nonmagical in nature and can increase the area they are able to influence with their magnetic powers. They can even fly by generating magnetic fields, making them near impossible to avoid. Bring lots of stone and wood weapons, and even armor if you can manage it.

TACTICS

Ferrophlegm possess many unusual properties that make battle with them dramatically different from other oozes. The creatures is always flying when given the chance, only descending to the ground in pursuit of elusive prey. Prioritizing targets with large amounts of metal on their person, the ooze moves quickly to draw in as many metal objects as it can with its Magnetic Fluid feature. More intelligent than the average ooze, a ferrophlegm can quickly discern which foes it cannot disarm or manipulate with its magnetic powers, instead injecting them with its Pseudopod attacks and using its Recall Fluid action to inflict massive damage. A ferrophlegm will always use its environment to its advantage, slipping through tiny openings and hiding around corners, all the while dropping heavy metal objects upon the heads of its attackers.

Easier Tactics — An easier ferrophlegm should stay low to the ground, wading fearlessly into battle and poorly optimizing its Magnetic Fluid feature. The ooze should not adapt to its enemies' strategies, relentlessly striking the same targets over and over, regardless of their effectiveness. It will always seek to draw enemies closer to it using its Ferrokinesis feature, even if such a strategy would prove disastrous.

Harder Tactics — A challenging ferrophlegm stays out of reach, using its flight to engage in hit and run tactics that disarm its enemies. The creature's Ferrokinesis feature comes heavily into play here, as the ooze will hurl armored targets high into the air or fill the combat area with heavy metal hazards and traps. If given time to prepare, the ooze sculpts a battlefield from metal that favors its abilities and tactics.

PLOT HOOKS

Raucous Repulsion. Two ferrophlegm with identical polarities are attempting to consume one another, generating catastrophic magnetic fields in the surrounding area. Unable to get close enough to injure the

other, the creatures have been battling nonstop for days, devastating the nearby gnome communities caught in the crossfire.

Royal Embarrassment. A royal heirloom is lost in combat with a ferrophlegm, which escaped into an abandoned iron mine with its prize. The prince needs the crown returned before his coronation in seven days, or he cannot be crowned king.

Art Is Life. A halfling sculptor requires a still living ferrophlegm to finish her masterpiece. She is offering a *mantle of spell resistance* to any who are able to both capture and safely transport a living ferrophlegm to her studio in the heart of a bustling metropolis.

TREASURE

Ferrophlegm take years to digest the metal they acquire, and often collect far more than they can consume. Because of the all-encompassing nature of their magnetic powers, a ferrophlegm's body is filled with a dizzying diversity of metal objects. From mundane to magical, the ooze meticulously collects everything metal it finds, though one can expect considerable warping and damage to the objects from constant exposure to powerful magnetic fields. For this reason, half of the treasure found within a ferrophlegm is always scrap metal, useful only to those with experience in metalsmithing.

FERROPHLEGM

Huge ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 220 (21d12 + 84)
Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +11, Wis +6
Skills Athletics +11, Perception +11
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 90 ft., blind beyond that radius, passive Perception 21
Languages —
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Amorphous. The ooze can move through a space as narrow as half an inch wide without squeezing. Additionally, other creatures can enter the ooze's space, which is considered difficult terrain.

Deflection. Attacks made against the ooze with weapons that contain metal or that fire ammunition containing metal (such as bolts or arrows) are made at disadvantage.

Magnetic Fluid. The ooze's body is magnetic. Whenever the ooze comes within 10 ft. of a metal object of Medium size or smaller for the first time on its turn or starts its turn within 10 ft. of such an object, it is drawn into the ooze's body, becoming a part of its form and moving with the ooze as it moves. Objects being securely worn (such as armor) are immune to this effect, but more loosely secured items such as rings or necklaces are not. If the object is being carried or held, its wielder may attempt a DC 19 Strength saving throw to hold onto the object and prevent it from being drawn in. An object held within the ooze's body can be removed by a creature taking an action to attempt a DC 19 Strength (Athletics) ability check, removing the object on a success.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ooze makes two attacks and takes one other action.

Ferrokinesis. The ooze telekinetically moves a metal object of Huge size or smaller up to 90 ft. If the object ends this movement in the air, the ooze can suspend it there for as long as the object remains within 90 ft. of it. A creature attempting to physically move the target must take an action to make a Strength (Athletics) ability check contested by the oozes Strength (Athletics) ability check, or the attempt fails.

If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, it moves with the object unless it removes the object from its person.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d12+6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned as it is injected with a portion of the ooze's metallic body. The fluid of the ooze can be removed by a creature taking an action to attempt a DC 19 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check, ending the condition on a success.

Reverse Polarity. The ooze reverses the magnet charge in its body. Until the end of its next turn, metal objects within range of its Magnetic Fluid feature that would be drawn toward the ooze are instead pushed away from the ooze to the outside of the area. Additionally, attacks made with metallic weapons or ammunition against the ooze are made at disadvantage.

Magnetic Pulse (Recharge 5-6). Until the end of its next turn, the range the ooze's magnetic fluid feature increases from 10 ft. to 60 ft.

Recall Fluid. A creature within 90 ft. poisoned by the ooze's Pseudopod feature takes 55 (10d10) piercing damage and the poisoned condition ends.

ECOLOGY

A Ferrophlegm will venture a considerable distance in search of a meal but will always return to a secure location to feed. Feeding ferrophlegm want nothing more than to be left alone, only attacking if approached. Where a ferrophlegm makes its lair can be difficult to ascertain. Their flight makes the creatures difficult to track. They will happily roost anywhere they can avoid being disturbed. Such areas must be large enough to accommodate Huge metal objects, often used as a means of defense as well as food. To find ferrophlegm in their natural habitat, one must mine deeply for veins of iron ore and other easily magnetized metals. Many mining cultures have emergency protocols for accidently discovering ferrophlegm and may even abandon rich mines if an infestation is bad enough.

SLAG SLIME

A burning amalgamation of living metal, the aptly named slag slime oozes across the landscape, reducing everything in its path ash. Appearing as a blisteringly hot pile of forge slag, these creatures are relentlessly destructive in pursuit of metal to feed upon. The heat that radiates from their bodies is so intense as to melt stone, flesh, and metal indiscriminately, making them rightly feared by all but the most fire-resistant creatures. Hungry for metal of all types, a slag slime melts down what it can find, adding the material to its own mass. Wherever these creatures are found, destruction follows, making them reviled and worshiped as a destructive aspect of nature.

The Slag Slime

To understand the power of a slag slime, simply place your hand within an active dwarven forge. I jest — please don't do that, dear reader. In all seriousness, this ooze is as astounding as it is dangerous. I struggle to rationalize how this thing is even alive, appearing as molten metal that leapt from the furnace to explore the world. I do not believe the slag slime even comprehends the impact its presence has on the environment. At best the creature barely understands the concept of heat, which it uses to seek out metallic substances to melt down and consume. If one were foolish enough to encounter this creature intentionally, pack plenty of healing potions, several gallons of water (dehydration is a real killer), and enough burn treatment for a small army.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Brute

Favors: Fire (Protection from), Healing, Range, Strength (High)

Foils: Hit Points (Low), Spells (With Duration), Stealth

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a slag slime with an Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

SLAG SLIME LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	The heat of a slag slime melts everything in its proximity. This property can convert stone or metal terrain into a molten cesspool of deadly slag.
21	Slag slimes can burrow through almost anything, emerging like a living volcanic eruption. They can also increase their size dramatically, filling a room with their molten bodies to the detriment of all present.
25	A slag slime can completely envelope creatures and objects, smothering them in its molten body. The capacity of the slime increases according to its size, and few creatures can escape the slime's grasp through strength alone.

TACTICS

Voracious and relentless, slag slimes understand only that they must melt their food in order to consume it, and that they need to "sample" something first to make sure it is food. Unless attacked recently, a slag slime acts like an overly curious animal, nudging pieces of its environment to sample molten scraps. If damaged or if it discovers food, a slag slime goes berserk, unleashing devastating blows and rampaging about its environment. An angry slag slime will rapidly increase in size, using its Expansion action often to prevent food from avoiding it easily. When faced with evasive enemies, the slime will sling ranged attacks or burrow beneath the ground, using its Thermalsense feature to perfectly target even hidden or invisible enemies. Slag slimes lack the presence of mind to retreat, mindlessly fighting to the death and incinerating anything that comes within range.

Easier Tactics — Don't have the slime optimize its molten slag feature; if multiple PC's want to come into the slime's reach that is their call. The slime should never Envelope more than a single creature at a time and will only move into other creature's spaces in order to do so. The slime should attack a diverse pool of targets, never focusing on a single character for than an attack or two. In extreme cases, the slime may even fail to recognize when a creature is immune or resistant to its fire damage, mindlessly continuing its assault.

Harder Tactics – The slime should almost always attack from a burrowed position, erupting from the ground to enter as many character's spaces as possible. If the slime has enough time to prepare, it will use its Expansion feature to make itself as large as possible prior to attacking. If the slime is damaged, it will burrow underground with an enveloped target, using its Harden feature once it is safe from threats to recover from damage.

PLOT HOOKS

Living Lava. A volcano erupts, launching six slag slimes miles away from their home. The creatures immediately embark upon a destructive feeding frenzy, causing massive collateral damage with each passing day. A plan is proposed to lure the slimes back to their volcanic home, but none are willing to volunteer for the role of bait.

Dumpster Fire. A slag slime is used as an extremely efficient garbage disposal by a gang of gnomish inventors. Unfortunately, one forgot to lock the door to the garbage pit and now the slime is loose in their workshop, destroying countless miraculous inventions. The gnomes need an immediate solution and will pay double to any who can return the slime to its "home" in the garbage disposal.

Black Ops. A hobgoblin war band has a dormant slag slime in its possession and threatens to launch the creature via catapult at any who dare oppose them. If someone were able to steal the dormant creature out from under the hobgoblin's noses without waking it, the war band will have lost its most potent weapon.

TREASURE

Due to the extreme heat, few objects are able to survive prolonged contact with a slag slime. However, the soup of different metals churning within a slag slime's body form a complex alloy if the creature is under the effects of its Harden action, creating a core of incredibly rare metal. If the creature is slain in this state, the core can be mined from the slime's remains, which provides enough metal to forge a single suit of armor, metal weapon, or a 5 ft. by 5 ft. square of metal 1 inch thick. Anything made from this metal is immune to fire damage in addition to metal armor's usual immunities and is resistant to all other damage.

ECOLOGY

Native to volcanic areas, slag slimes prefer a life immersed in molten magma, drifting through the fluid in search of metal. Occasionally, volcanic activity forces these creatures to the surface. If there is no metal nearby, the slimes typically burrow back beneath the ground almost immediately, but the presence of any solid metal in the area is enough to lure a curious slime above ground. Slag slimes appear to have an instinctive distaste for water and will actively seek shelter from rain and avoid large bodies of water. Due to the extreme effects of the creature's presence, any area visited by a slag slime is reduced to a smoldering ruin in short order. Even creatures that enjoy the heat rarely tolerate the presence of a slag slime, whose mindless nature makes it too much of a liability for a meaningful coexistence.

SLAG SLIME

Huge ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 262 (21d12 + 126)
Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+7)	21 (+5)	22 (+6)	1 (-5)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +12, Wis +8
Skills Perception +14
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses thermalsense (see traits) 120 ft., blind beyond that radius, passive Perception 24
Languages —
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Amorphous. Other creatures can enter the slime's space, but a creature that does so is subjected to the slime's Molten Slag feature immediately, and again at the end of each of its turns for as long as it remains within the slime's space.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When the slime fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Melt Magic. The slime is so hot that it melts magic itself. The duration of spells and magical effects with a duration greater than instantaneous affecting only the slime have their durations reduced to 1 round.

Molten Slag. At the start of each of the slime's turns, everything within 15 ft. of it takes 14 (4d6) fire damage, standing water evaporates, and flammable objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried ignite. A creature that touches the slime or hits it with a melee attack while within 15 ft. of it takes 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Additionally, if the slime reduces an object or structure made of metal or stone to zero hit points, it completely melts it, leaving a pool of molten slag in its space. This slag is considered difficult terrain and deals 14 (4d6) fire damage to anything that enters the area for the first time on its turn or starts its turn there. After 1 hour, slag produced by this feature cools becoming harmless but remaining difficult terrain.

Thermalsense. The slime can detect creatures within 120 ft. of it that are colder than the slime. Such creatures cannot be hidden from the slime.

Volcanic Tunneler. The slime can move through solid objects as though they were difficult terrain using its burrow speed.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The slime makes two attacks and takes one other action.

Harden (1/short or long rest). The slime rapidly cools its body, transforming its body into solid metal. While in this state, the slime is incapacitated, has resistance to all damage, its Molten Slag feature is suppressed, it cannot be critically hit, and regains 30 hit points at the start of each of its turns. The slime can choose to end this effect at the end of each of its turns, or until 24 hours as passed. Once the slime has used this feature, it cannot use it again until it finishes a short or long rest.

Creatures engulfed by the slime when it uses this action may attempt a DC 21 Strength saving throw. On a success, the creature escapes from the ooze and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the ooze. On a failure, the creature is incapacitated in addition to the other effects of being engulfed.

Envelop. The slime attempts to engulf a single creature or object completely in its space, forcing the creature to succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, or become engulfed. On a successful saving throw, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the ooze. A creature that chooses not to be pushed is engulfed. On a failed saving throw, the creature is engulfed.

While engulfed, the creature is restrained, cannot breathe, and has total cover against creatures other than the slime. If the slime moves, an engulfed target moves with the slime.

A creature enveloped by the slime can try to escape by taking an action to attempt a DC 21 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the ooze.

Expansion (3/short or long rest). Until the slime finishes a short or long rest, it increases its dimensions by 5 ft. in every direction.

Hurl Slag. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (1d12 + 7) piercing and 10 (3d6) fire.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage and 10 (3d6) fire damage. If the target is a creature, the slime may grapple it (Escape DC 21).

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The slime 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. The slime regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Expansion (Costs 2 Actions). The slime takes its Expansion action.

Squelch. The slime moves up to half its speed.

Strike. The slime makes a single attack.

Nartheneen

Long ago there lived a race of supreme authority and profound magical power—the Nartheneen. Their desert empire was a jewel of the desert from which wonders flowed. Today all that remains of their civilization is ruins, but some scholars believe pockets of Nartheneen still exist. Marked by long legs with backward-jointed knees, six fingers on each hand, and the heads of animals, the Nartheneen are not likely to pass unnoticed in modern society. Their culture is defined by rigid meritocracy and a clearly defined but highly mobile caste system, with members of each caste marked by replacing their heads with those of animals. Though each Nartheneen is born into a caste, through an arcane ritual they can transmute their bodies into new forms better suited to their aptitudes.

There are six castes, divided into three "lesser" and three "greater" castes, although the words are imperfectly translated from the Nartheneen language. More accurately, the "lesser" castes are many in number and fulfill the most fundamental needs of the society: food, infrastructure, and trade. The "greater" castes are restricted to the most exceptional individuals and cover the loftier pursuits of scholars, priests, and warriors.



TALIEN'S NOTES

Up front, let me state that the theory that the Nartheneen are the progenitors of all modern humanoids is rubbish. The testimony of a group of adventurers who claim to have traveled back to and from the height of the Nartheneen civilization is hardly scholarly. With that clarified, the Nartheneen are nonetheless a fascinating study in differing cultural norms and well worthy of consideration. Their meritocracy was relentless, and each caste believed itself to be the most essential to its society's function. Yet they bore no ill will toward the other castes, for they were all aware that the others felt as they did. It was this common feeling of utmost importance that paradoxically united them, allowing them to act with coordination toward common goals.

It was also this unity that ruined them, I'm afraid. A foul entity called the Ebon Flame, the details of which remain vague even under my scrutiny, corrupted them with the promise of great magics—a promise it delivered upon but which carried a cost beyond imagining. Even now, I have several of my associates keeping watch for mentions of this Ebon Flame. If it ever returns to our world, we will be ready.

For further reading on the Nartheneen and the lingering impact of their poor decisions, consult *The Lion's Vault* by Jorvis Nesros, a scholar at the University of Archensheen. While his account of interactions with the Nartheneen may bring his sanity into question, I have generally found his extrapolations and scientific conclusions sound.



It is noteworthy that the most combat-capable Nartheneen are among the greater castes, implying the significance of war in their society.

RIVER-BLESSED

While the Nartheneen eschewed deity-centric religions, they paid reverence to three forces they saw as essential to life. Each was represented by a single word in the Nartheneen language but is best expressed as a hyphenated compound in Common: Waters-of-Life, Scorching-Light, and Mother-Source. Some Nartheneen were gifted with an affinity for channeling water magic, and they were called the river-blessed. Waters-of-Life was in many ways the "good" in the Nartheneen view of good versus evil, and the river-blessed were seen as healers and saints.

Only members of the "lesser" castes could be river-blessed, identified by their animal heads: crocodile, feline, and hippopotamus. Crocodiles were the builders, capable of raising great edifices in mere moments and skilled at shaping battlefields. Those with feline heads were members of the merchant class, expert traders and, in a fight, not above cheating and conniving. Hippopotamus Nartheneen were stewards, responsible for agriculture and the physical health of others; they were menders and healers when called to take up arms.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a river-blessed with an Intelligence (History) ability check.

RIVER-BLESSED LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	Nartheneen are an ancient race believed to be extinct. There are several different varieties identifiable by their differing animal heads. Some scholars believe the Nartheneen worship water and make use of it in battle.
19	Nartheneen river-blessed are powerfully defensive, capable of shielding allies from harm and channeling the deflected damage into potent spells of their own. Each caste of river-blessed has unique abilities, but all are at their best when supporting allies.
24	River-blessed of the crocodile caste can raise walls of stone in an instant, dividing their enemies, and they channel water to devastate a single foe. Those of the feline caste are skilled thieves and can disarm even a seasoned veteran. Their water magic brings dense mud with it, debilitating their foes in a large area. Hippo river-blessed have the ability to mend wounds and ward a large number of allies against damage for a short time.

TACTICS

River-blessed need allies to deal damage. They are support creatures, able to debilitate enemies and create favorable situations for their allies. Alone, they aren't much of a threat. The river-blessed have some abilities in common in all their incarnations, so we'll start with those. You should use Warding of the River against powerful, single-target hits like a paladin's Divine Smite, a rogue's Sneak Attack, or a critical hit. It also works well against spells like *disintegrate*. Don't be too stingy about it—you need to use it every round to accumulate enough prevented damage to make good use of Summon the Flood. In general, use Summon the Flood after preventing 40 to 50 damage.

Beyond that, each variety of river-blessed has different tactics:

Crocodile Caste

Crocodile caste use We Are Builders on their first turn to cast *wall of stone* and split the party. Though the river-blessed doesn't have to worry about losing concentration due to taking damage, it is still vulnerable to *dispel magic*. After raising the wall, the river-blessed should choose to focus on melee or ranged attacks depending on party composition, using ranged attacks to mess with spellcasters and melee attacks when threatened in close combat. Use Summon the Flood on dangerous characters like spellcasters, paladins, or raging barbarians, because even if they succeed on their saving throws, they're going to lose a turn.

Feline Caste

Feline caste river-blessed work best in melee combat, using their Sleight of Paw trait to purloin items from the party, focusing on relieving martial characters of their magical weapons. Use Summon the Flood to hit at least two characters without damaging any allies.

Hippo Caste

Hippo caste should keep their distance at all times, relying on Hydro Jet to deal damage. They are powerful healers and should focus their Waters-of-Life ability on allies suffering from debilitating conditions to get them back in the fight. Once they have prevented at least 50 damage

The River-Blessed

Nartheneen cosmology emphasized the natural world as divine. Their "deities" included Waters-of-Life as a veneration of the necessity of water for existence. They saw it as a force for good, but one that could take life just as easily through drowning, flooding, or its absence in drought. Nartheneen uncommonly adept at channeling water were held in high regard, and from my own studies, only those of the so-called lesser castes were ever observed with such abilities. Furthermore, such Nartheneetn lost these abilities if they attempted to carry them into a greater caste. Fascinating.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Bards, Druids, Monks, Spellcasters,

Foils: Fighters, Melee, Metal, Rangers, Rogues, Strength (Low)

with Warding of the River, use Summon the Flood to give their allies a much-needed pick-me-up.

Easier Tactics – The simplest change to decrease the difficulty of the river-blessed is to avoid using their bonus abilities gained from Foundations of the Lesser. Don't have the feline caste disarm every turn, hold off on having the crocodile caste use *wall of stone* for a round or two, and don't use the hippo caste's healing ability to remove spells like *hold person*. Delaying Summon the Flood can make the fight easier, but it can also cause you to inadvertently set up a huge explosion of damage the party isn't ready for.

Harder Tactics – Pairing two river-blessed with allies who are skilled at keeping the party away from them is a deadly combo (ram-headed sun-cursed work well for this). Having two of them is a dramatic increase in

RIVER-BLESSED

Medium humanoid (Nartheneen), lawful neutral

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +8, Wis +9, Cha +6
Skills Acrobatics +9, History +6, Insight +9, Perception +9, Stealth +9, Survival +9
Damage Resistances cold, fire
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Nartheneen
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Foundations of the Lesser. The river-blessed is a member of one of the following castes, granting it the following traits and actions according to which animal head it possesses.

Crocodile – We Are Builders (1/Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action on each of its turns, the river-blessed can cast *wall of stone*. The river-blessed automatically succeeds on saving throws to maintain concentration on the effect. Once it has used this ability, it must finish a short or long rest before it can do so again.

Feline – Sleight of Paw. The river-blessed can take the Disengage action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Additionally, once per turn, when the river-blessed hits a creature with a melee attack, it can attempt to steal one item, object, or weapon worn or carried by the target. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or have the item taken by the river-blessed. A creature can attempt to recover a stolen item as an action by attempting a contested Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check against the river-blessed's Dexterity (Acrobatics). If the target wins, the item is returned.

Hippo – Waters-of-Life. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the river-blessed can conjure healing waters that wash over it or one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target regains 18 (4d8) hit points, and if the target is charmed, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, or stunned, those conditions immediately end.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The river-blessed makes two Claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) slashing damage, and until the end of the river-blessed's next turn, attacks against the target have advantage.

Hydro Jet. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 38 (6d10 + 5) magical bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature concentrating on an effect, it has disadvantage on any saving throws it attempts to maintain concentration in response to damage dealt by this attack.

Summon the Flood (Recharge 5–6). The river-blessed calls upon the blessings of the river to unleash a flood of magical energies. The exact effect is dependent on the river-blessed's caste (see the Foundations of the Lesser trait).

Crocodile – Crushing Depths. The river-blessed chooses a creature it can see within 60 feet of it and dashes it against the ground with a barrage of water. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take magical bludgeoning damage equal to the amount prevented by Warding of the River and be knocked prone and stunned until the end of its next turn. A successful saving throw halves the damage and the target is instead incapacitated until the end of its next turn. After using this ability, the damage prevented by Warding of the River resets to 0.

Feline – Mud of the Delta. The river-blessed brings forth a wave of dark, muddled water at a point it can see within 60 feet of it. The wave crashes down on all creatures within a 20-foot radius of that point, forcing them to succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or take magical bludgeoning damage equal to half the amount the river-blessed has prevented with Warding of the River and become restrained until the end of their next turn. A successful saving throw halves the damage and prevents the restrained condition. Once the river-blessed uses this ability, the damage prevented by Warding of the River resets to 0.

Hippo – Shielding Shallows. The river-blessed and creatures of its choice within 30 feet of it are wreathed in magical, protective water. Each target gains temporary hit points equal to half of the damage prevented by Warding of the River. After using this ability, the damage prevented by Warding of the River resets to 0.

REACTIONS

Warding of the River. As a reaction when a creature the river-blessed can see within 30 feet of it takes damage, the river-blessed can extend a protective ward, causing the creature to take no damage instead. Record the amount of damage prevented in this way as a cumulative total. Unless expended, 10 minutes after the last time the river-blessed used this ability, this total resets to 0.

difficulty because it allows them to shield each other with Warding of the River, negating the most effective strategy of killing the healers first. Any other tweaks you make to keep the river-blessed alive longer—like favorable terrain that offers them cover or tight spaces so the party physically can't get close—further increases the difficulty of the encounter.

PLOT HOOKS

Hippoculturist. The party encounters an ancient humanoid with the head of a hippopotamus. She has managed to grow a small garden of bountiful food out of a modest pile of dirt and a little water. She wants to be left alone, but her secrets might save an entire city from famine.

Mistaken Identity. A cat-headed humanoid is mistaken for a rakshasa and hunted by an order of paladins. In retribution for this unwarranted aggression, he steals several items of value from the paladins. He appeals to the party for help and offers them ancient knowledge.

Living History. An old tomb is unearthed, and within a crocodile-headed humanoid works tirelessly, carving statuettes and idols of unknown figures. She was cursed by Ishaq-Zahur, the last priest-king of the Nartheneen, with endless servitude. Only by finishing a perfect idol can she find peace.

PRIEST-KING

The term "priest-king" in the Nartheneen language was inaccurately translated by an early scholar who believed all rulers of Nartheneen society were male. In Nartheneen, the title is a single word and non-gendered, but "priest-or-priestess-king-or-queen" doesn't roll off the tongue and, with several publications in circulation, the less accurate term has become embedded in public consciousness.

TREASURE

Nartheneen river-blessed don't carry many possessions, but the fresh body of a species thought to be extinct is incredibly valuable in its own right. Scholars will pay 5,000 gp per body for the opportunity to study them. Desecration of a body is a profane act to the Nartheneen, and should the party sell the bodies in this way, they will find themselves the target of any and all surviving Nartheneen aware of this transgression.

ECOLOGY

The Nartheneen are conspicuously absent in most areas of the world when considering their power, but the river-blessed are the most likely to make an appearance. They are driven to find ways to trade with, build for, and heal those in need. It is in their very nature, and so they are often in hiding near civilization, looking for opportunities to influence events without being noticed. They seldom travel with other Nartheneen, for the risk of a disaster killing more than one is too terrible to consider, but they are often aware of the location of other nearby members of their species. Outside Nartheneen society these creatures struggle to find their place, easily exploited or driven to violence as their dysfunction outside a rigid caste system causes loneliness and isolation.

SUN-CURSED

Water fits the role of good in Nartheneen cosmology, and the sun is its necessary opposite. While it is no less important to existence, in the desert the sun is a bringer of death. "Scorching-Light" is the Nartheneen term for the sun, and some members of the greater castes find themselves drawn to it like moths. Those who skirt the fine line between ambition and recklessness are able to channel tremendous power, but this aptitude and talent is viewed as a terrible burden. It is against the nature of a Nartheneen to ignore its gifts, and those aligned to Scorching-Light are called the sun-cursed for the path they must walk.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a sun-cursed with an Intelligence (History) ability check.

SUN-CURSED LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	The ancient Nartheneen had a complex relationship with the sun, which they viewed as both necessary for life and a lethal threat. Those who had an affinity for the sun were called sun-cursed and were viewed with respect and fear. The three greater castes could become sun-cursed, identifiable by the head of an ibis, a jackal, or a ram.
20	Sun-cursed can deal tremendous damage. Ibis sun-cursed are potent spellcasters that can twist the minds of their enemies to make resistance impossible, while jackal sun-cursed project an aura of protection that wards their allies from magical harm. Ram sun-cursed are brutal warriors who can turn a slight drop in their foe's guard into a lethal strike.
25	Though they can dish out the pain, sun-cursed are somewhat fragile. They have good defenses but will fall under a concentrated assault. Additionally, they are not particularly agile and are susceptible to attacks and spells that require them to dodge. They are resistant to cold, fire, and radiant energies, and those with ram heads are also resistant to physical attacks.

TACTICS

The sun-cursed's tactics depend entirely on its caste:

Ibis Caste

Ibis caste are typical damage-dealing spellcasters, targeting low-Intelligence, durable characters like barbarians, paladins, and fighters with their Challenge of Minds ability to inflict maximum damage with their spells. Start the fight with *sunbeam* if the party is grouped up or

if they have spellcasters of their own likely to use *counterspell* or *dispel magic*. Otherwise, *fireball* is a good choice if it can hit three or more characters without damaging any of the sun-cursed's allies. Follow up with *hypnotic pattern* on the second round. Use Scorching Counterspell whenever the party casts a spell of 5th level or higher, and remember that the sun-cursed is not actually casting *counterspell*, so that ability can't be interrupted by another casting of *counterspell* and even functions in an *antimagic field*.

Jackal Caste

Jackal sun-cursed must stay near their allies as much as possible. Their aura is incredibly powerful and weakens or entirely negates most spells the party casts. On the sun-cursed's turns, focus on using *banishment* to remove non-Charisma-based spellcasters, barbarians, and rogues in that order. Use *heal* on any ally that takes a lot of damage in a short time. Don't forget that *harm* is technically a disease effect, and several characters could be immune to such effects entirely—use it on fragile spellcasting types. After a few rounds, use Solar Inferno on any tightly grouped characters to inflict massive damage.

Ram Caste

Ram sun-cursed are best kept near a high-priority target like a leader monster (river-blessed, for example) so they can use Brutal Guardian to keep their allies protected. They have simple turns, using their halberds to hit nearby targets and trying to push characters out of position. Their Leap ability lets them reposition easily, but it's only one attack instead of their usual two, so only use it if they otherwise wouldn't be able to attack at all.

Easier Tactics – Avoid the big spells from the jackal and ibis castes, and hold off on Solar Inferno and *hypnotic pattern* until late into the fight. Throw in a cantrip between more powerful spells to space out the damage. The ram sun-cursed should use Leap regularly so they're making fewer attacks.

Harder Tactics – Open with the big moves. In the first round, ibis sun-cursed should cast *hypnotic pattern*, and jackal sun-cursed should drop Solar Inferno. Ram sun-cursed can use their long reach and fast speed to advance slightly, attack ranged characters and spellcasters, and then move back into position.

PLOT HOOKS

Book Burnings. A humanoid with the head of an ibis has been ransacking libraries, taking the most valuable books and then burning the buildings to the ground. What is it searching for?

Cult of the Sun. Two jackal-headed humanoids claim to be the last clergy of the world's first religion. They are searching for converts, but those who accept are never seen again.

The Duel. A ram-headed warrior offers an open challenge: any who can defeat her may claim her *+3 halberd*, an ancient, mighty weapon. Unfortunately, her honorable challenge is also creating a trail of dead as she travels the land.

The Sun-Cursed

The sun-cursed are the other half of the Nartheneen belief system, a term for those who had an affinity for the desert heat and sunlight and were seen as cursed. The word has a subtly different meaning among the Nartheneen, implying one who has a difficult or unpleasant path they must walk rather than one who is waylaid by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The sun-cursed were wielders of great power, and they were only found among the more ambitious greater castes. The fact that their society's elite had a predilection for evil may be indicative of deeper problems in the social hierarchy, perhaps the very same that led to their eventual collapse.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Soldier

Favors: Bards, Disabling, Range, Rangers, Wizards

Foils: Clerics, Cold (Damage), Druids, Fighters, Fire (Damage), Mobility (Low), Radiant (Damage)

TREASURE

Sun-cursed have magic-infused blood that is of great value to spellcasters and warriors. Extracting the blood of a sun-cursed requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check and yields one vial of blood per sun-cursed. A vial of blood can be sold for 1,000 gp, and the bodies of the Nartheneen sun-cursed are worth 18,000 gp, though selling either blood or bodies attracts significant negative attention from all other Nartheneen.

Sun-Cursed Blood

Potion, very rare

One vial of sun-cursed blood can be substituted for the material components of a spell as long as that component is worth no more than 1,000 gp. The blood is always consumed when casting the spell, even if the standard material component would not be. Targets of the spell automatically fail their first saving throw against it. If a spell cast in this way deals fire or radiant damage, it deals the maximum possible damage when enhanced with this blood. You take 7 (2d6) fire damage plus 7 (2d6) radiant damage as part of casting the spell, but you don't need to attempt a saving throw to maintain concentration due to this damage.

Alternately, one vial of sun-cursed blood can be applied to a melee or ranged weapon as an action. The affected equipment becomes magical. At the start of each of your turns, roll 2d6. Each time you hit with a weapon attack, that attack deals bonus radiant damage equal to the result, and you take radiant damage equal to half the result (rounded down). These effects last for 1 minute.

ECOLOGY

Sun-cursed prefer warm, open areas with little shade. Some climb mountains to be above the clouds; otherwise they inhabit deserts and vast plains. They are reclusive most of the time but are eventually and inevitably driven to take some kind of drastic action, at which point they enter society and usually cause a great deal of chaos. Sun-Cursed are figures of authority in Northeneen society, which treats all non-Northeneen as slaves. When dealing with modern creatures, sun-cursed are tyrannical and cruel, incapable of seeing "lesser creatures" as anything more than

SUN-CURSED

Medium humanoid (Northeneen), chaotic evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 190 (20d8 + 100)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	24 (+7)	24 (+7)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +10, Cha +9
Skills Arcana +12, Athletics +12, History +12, Perception +12, Religion +12
Damage Resistances cold, fire, radiant
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages Northeneen
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Ambitions of the Greater. The sun-cursed is a member of one of the following castes, granting it the following traits and actions according to which animal head it possesses.

Ibis – Challenge of Minds. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the sun-cursed can initiate a challenge of intellect with a creature it can see within 60 feet of it. The sun-cursed and the target attempt opposed Intelligence ability checks. If the sun-cursed wins, until the end of its next turn the target automatically fails its next saving throw against one of the sun-cursed's abilities.

Jackal – Sunlight Burns Impurities. The sun-cursed and all allies within 30 feet of it have resistance to damage from spells and gain a bonus to all saving throws equal to the sun-cursed's Charisma modifier.

Ram – Unsurpassed Warrior. The sun-cursed wields a powerful halberd, and its weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 18–20. It has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Arcane Spellcasting (Ibis Only). The sun-cursed's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *scorching ray*
3/day each: *fireball*, *hypnotic pattern*
1/day: *sunbeam*

Divine Spellcasting (Jackal Only). The sun-cursed's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 20). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *sacred flame*
3/day: *banishment*
1/day each: *harm*, *heal*

Stubborn Warrior (Ram Only). If the sun-cursed would attempt a saving throw at the end of its turn to end an effect, it instead attempts that saving throw at the start of its turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The sun-cursed makes two weapon attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d6 + 7) slashing damage.

Halberd (Ram Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) radiant damage, and the target is pushed up to 10 feet away from the sun-cursed.

Leap (Ram Only). The sun-cursed moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks and makes a single Halberd attack before, after, or during this movement.

Solar Inferno (Jackal Only) (Recharge 6). The sun-cursed chooses a point it can see within 120 feet of it. Creatures of its choice within 20 feet of that point must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 49 (14d6) fire damage and gain two levels of exhaustion. A successful saving throw halves the damage and the creature gains only one level of exhaustion.

REACTIONS

Brutal Guardian (Ram Only). As a reaction when a creature within 10 feet of the sun-cursed makes an attack that targets a creature other than the sun-cursed, the sun-cursed can make a single Halberd attack against the attacker. On a hit, the attack deals maximum damage, the push distance is increased to 20 feet, and the sun-cursed regains the use of its reaction at the end of that turn.

Scorching Counterspell (Ibis Only). As a reaction when a creature within 60 feet of the sun-cursed that it can see casts a spell, the sun-cursed blasts the magic apart with burning radiance. If the creature is casting a spell of 5th level or lower, the spell fails and has no effect. If the spell is 6th level or higher, the sun-cursed attempts an Intelligence ability check against a DC of 10 + the spell's level. On a success, the creature's spell fails and has no effect. Whether this ability causes the spell to fail or not, the creature casting the spell takes 14 (4d6) fire damage plus 14 (4d6) radiant damage.

disposable tools. The only thing that can earn a sun-cursed's begrudging respect is power in all its forms, though they consider violence the most practical tool of authority.

EBON PYROMANCER

The third aspect of Nartheneen belief, Mother-Source, fell out of favor following the arrival of the Ebon Flame, a violent and corruptive deity. Some Nartheneen gave themselves completely over to this evil, surrendering body and soul in exchange for arcane power. Those who survived became ebon pyromancers, consumed completely by the whims and desires of their new master. No trace of their personality remains, and they exist only to destroy the enemies of the Nartheneen. Ebon pyromancers always have the head of a hawk, indicating their status as members of the Nartheneen elite.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an ebon pyromancer with an Intelligence (History) ability check.

EBON PYROMANCER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	The creatures known as ebon pyromancers are corrupted members of an ancient race called the Nartheneen. They have been entirely subsumed by the Ebon Flame, a mysterious extraplanar entity that offers great power at a terrible price. They are no longer truly humanoid and are hostile on sight to all who do not serve their master.
21	Ebon pyromancers are capable of spreading netherplasm, a toxic substance created when the Ebon Flame's powers manifest. Even standing near the pyromancer risks exposure. The more netherplasm that sticks to you, the more severe its effects become. If the quantity reaches critical mass, the ebon pyromancer can cause a cascade reaction with potentially lethal consequences.
26	The ebon pyromancer has a limited store of energy that it uses to empower its abilities—when it runs out, it becomes somewhat less dangerous. It is completely immune to fire and radiant effects and is resistant to cold. Other forms of damage are fully effective, though ebon pyromancers are both resilient and hard to hit. A lack of agility is the closest thing they have to a weakness.

TACTICS

During an encounter, tracking the number of charges an ebon pyromancer has as well as the number of motes of netherplasm attached to each party member is crucial. All abilities that spread motes of netherplasm only affect "creatures of the ebon pyromancer's choice," so you don't need to worry about tracking motes of netherplasm on its allies. Consider asking players to track their own number of motes of netherplasm.

The Ebon Pyromancer

I do not ever wish to meet an ebon pyromancer. There is no room for negotiation, bargaining, or appeasement. They are walking destruction bent on the eradication of all who do not serve the Ebon Flame. Their bodies are suffused with the toxic byproducts of the Ebon Flame's magics, a substance called "netherplasm" by those who study the Nartheneen. It is virulent beyond imagining, and the ebon pyromancer's skill at weaponizing it is legendary. Because of this, they must be eradicated at the first sign of activity. They cannot be allowed to spread their plague.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Controller

Favors: Constitution (High), Fire (Protection From), Spells (Healing)

Foils: Constitution (Low), Melee, Healing (Lack of)

The ebon pyromancer's turn-by-turn tactics are fairly simple. Its goal is to end its turn within 10 feet of as many characters as possible to spread netherplasm via its Netherplasm Residue trait, and it should spend a charge to increase the radius if it can affect two or more additional characters by doing so. On its turn, target characters with no netherplasm with Cloying Death unless there are characters in melee, in which case you should make a single Necrotizing Fireclaw attack against them. Use All Shall Burn when available to block line of sight and force characters to move (ideally toward each other). If you're going to hit two or more characters when the flames detonate, spend a charge to maximize the damage.

On turns when All Shall Burn is not available, use Spread the Plague to affect as many characters as possible. If the plague is spreading to two or more characters, spend a charge to double the amount of netherplasm that attaches to them. Netherplasm gets quite dangerous once characters have three or more motes attached, and you should let that persist for a round or two before using Violent Detonation to clear them out. Ideally you want to use Violent Detonation twice in the fight, one about halfway through and another shortly before the ebon pyromancer is defeated.

Easier Tactics – Avoid stacking lots of motes of netherplasm on a single target. Keep them spread out between as many characters as possible, giving the party time to voluntarily remove the motes and heal up the damage taken from doing so. Hold back on All Shall Burn, only using it once every character has two motes.

Harder Tactics –You want to get as many motes of netherplasm on the party as possible, opening with All Shall Burn to get the ball rolling. Four motes of netherplasm is ideal before using Violent Detonation, because then they all automatically fail their saving throws and get stunned for one round, giving the ebon pyromancer time to spread the plague more and start the whole thing all over again.

PLOT HOOKS

Dark Fire. The party returns from an adventure to a location they're familiar with—perhaps a small outpost or even an entire town—to find it burned to ashes. Smoldering black flames are the only clue leading them to an ebon pyromancer.

Contamination. Netherplasm spreads among a community, perhaps one of friendly humanoids, perhaps one of less-friendly orcs or giants. Whether they seek the party's help or pretend they don't need it, unless something is done soon, there won't be much of a community left.

Dark Bargain. An ebon pyromancer approaches the party in an hour of need with an offer that's too good to be true. Perhaps the ebon pyromancer desperately needs a magic item (or even an artifact), but the price tag should involve swearing fealty to the Ebon Flame, a decision with unknowable consequences.

TREASURE

Ebon pyromancers leave behind only death and decay. The netherplasm that suffuses their bodies leaks out and, if not properly disposed of, contaminates the region. It can spread for miles, blighting the land and leaving bleached desert where once-verdant groves thrived. A bard, sorcerer, or wizard that drinks this substance can be endowed with tremendous power, though doing so requires they succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes necrotic damage equal to its hit point maximum, and its hit point maximum is reduced by half for 1 month. On a success, the spell *netherclasm* is added to their spells known or class spell list.

New Spell – Netherclasm

This spell is a class spell for warlocks.

Netherclasm

8th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (60-ft. line)
Components: V, S, M (a pound of rancid meat)
Duration: 1 round

A flood of ebon netherplasm extends from you along the ground in a 60-foot line that is 30 feet wide. Creatures in the area have their speed halved and have their vision reduced to 10 feet. At the start of your next turn, the area erupts in a blast of netherplasm that is 60 feet high. Creatures in the area when it erupts must attempt a Constitution saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) necrotic damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

ECOLOGY

Ebon pyromancers are incredibly out of their element. Even among the Nartheneen these creatures are feared, bending everything to their authority through an explicit threat of violence. Pyromancers are slave to the Ebon Flame, which wishes nothing but the complete subjugation of the weak and exploitation of the innocent. Each pyromancer acts as a part of the entity's grand plan. They establish cults in its name, sacrificing powerful creatures to the glory of the dark fire. What this accomplishes is a mystery that even the pyromancers don't know, as they are not privy to their deity's machinations. To bring the god's plans to fruition, pyromancers seek out useful minions and establish religious sights, preferably away from the prying eyes of good-natured beings.

EBON PYROMANCER

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 276 (24d8 + 168)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +13, Int +11, Wis +12, Cha +11
Skills Arcana +17, History +17, Perception +18
Damage Resistances cold
Damage Immunities fire, radiant
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 28
Languages Nartheneen
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Born of Flames. Creatures cannot be resistant to fire damage dealt by the pyromancer, and the pyromancer is immune to damage it would deal to itself.

Motes of Netherplasm. Several of the ebon pyromancer's abilities cause a mote of netherplasm to attach to a creature. An attached mote lasts until removed. When a creature starts its turn, it can choose to lose 20 hit points to remove a single mote of netherplasm attached to it. Casting *greater restoration* or more powerful magic removes all motes attached to the target. Motes have the following effects depending on the number attached to a creature, and the effects are cumulative.

- **1** — The creature cannot have resistance or immunity to necrotic damage.
- **2** — The creature has disadvantage on saving throws against the ebon pyromancer.
- **3** — The creature becomes vulnerable to necrotic damage, and the ebon pyromancer has resistance to all damage from the creature.
- **4+** — The creature automatically fails saving throws against the ebon pyromancer, and the ebon pyromancer automatically succeeds on saving throws against the creature.

Netherplasm Residue. When the ebon pyromancer starts its turn, creatures of its choice within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) necrotic damage and have a mote of netherplasm attach to it.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ebon pyromancer makes two Cloying Death attacks and uses All Shall Burn or Spread the Plague.

All Shall Burn (Recharge 5–6). The ebon pyromancer designates six points it can see within 120 feet of it, creating a 10-foot cube of dark flames centered on each point. The flames are opaque, and the area within is heavily obscured to all creatures other than the ebon pyromancer. Creatures that enter the area for the first time on a turn or start their turn there take 21 (6d6) fire damage. At the end of the ebon pyromancer's next turn, the flames detonate. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 49 (14d6) fire damage and a mote of netherplasm attaches to it. A successful saving throw halves the damage.

Cloying Death. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +13 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) fire damage plus 11 (2d10) necrotic damage, and a mote of netherplasm attaches to the target.

Necrotizing Fireclaw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d10 + 7) fire damage plus 11 (2d10) necrotic damage, and a mote of netherplasm attaches to the target.

Spread the Plague. The ebon pyromancer chooses a creature it can see within 60 feet of it that has at least one mote of netherplasm attached to it. Each other creature of the ebon pyromancer's choice within 15 feet of the target has a mote of netherplasm attached to it.

Violent Detonation. All motes of netherplasm attached to creatures by the pyromancer erupt in necrotic energy. Each creature with at least one mote attached to it must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) necrotic damage per mote of netherplasm attached to it and suffer an additional effect based on how many motes were attached before detonation.

- **1** — No additional effect.
- **2** — The creature can take an action or bonus action on its next turn, but not both.
- **3** — The creature is incapacitated until the end of its next turn.
- **4+** — The creature is paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

A successful saving throw halves the damage, and the creature suffers an additional effect as though it had one fewer mote attached, down to a minimum of 1. Any motes of netherplasm attached to affected creatures are destroyed at the end of pyromancer's turn.

Primeval Fey

Mysterious, tricky, and prone to acts that are hilarious to them but lethal to mortals, the fey are not to be trifled with. With age comes power, and legends speak of three ancient fey that still walk the wilds: the master of luck, the time-given form, and the first faerie dragon. Each plays by its own rules, distorting reality around itself to suit its whims, and those who expect to face them on the field of battle would do well to learn as much as they can beforehand. With the fey, knowledge is more than power—it is one's only hope of survival.

AHD MOAR

Luck incarnate, ahd moar are creatures of two phases: weal and woe. In one form they grant themselves supernaturally good luck, and in the other they inflict terrible misfortune on their enemies. They are capable of stealing and storing luck, both good and bad, and redistributing it at critical moments. These fey stalk important moments, seeking those tipping points when the course of history hinges on the actions of a few. Then they begin to meddle.

Each ahd moar appears as an earthen being studded with gold, its shape centered around a floating coin of great size. These creatures are incredibly intelligent despite their simple appearance and are happy to negotiate and bargain. But when an ahd moar decides whether to accept a given proposition or reject it outright, it spins the large, coin-like plate embedded in its body, with a fifty-fifty chance of either outcome. They have a mercurial temperament, switching between genial and rude with little warning beyond a turn of the coin-like plate.

The Ahd Moar

I sincerely believe that Johan K'ley, whom I consider an opportunistic friend, leveraged the services of an ahd moar in overturning his contract to a powerful fey. He also managed to turn the ahd moar into his personal servant, and for that I can offer no explanation. These creatures of fortune and failure are independent to a fault and all but impossible to lock into a lasting alliance. If you are considering opposing one who has the support of an ahd moar, you would be better served finding a way to turn the ahd moar against your opponent or postponing whatever agenda you have until the fey tires of cooperation and its luck turns sour.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Attack Bonus (High), Attacks (Weapons), Bards, Fighters, Paladins

Foils: Attacks (Few), Clerics, Single-Target, Warlocks, Wizards

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an ahd moar with an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

AHD MOAR LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Fey spirits often have dominion over aspects of life in a small area around themselves. Winter and summer fey commonly alter the weather around them, for example. The ahd moar, whose name loosely means "luck," can change the fortunes of anyone and everything around it, including itself, making success almost impossible or all but guaranteed.
19	The ahd moar can either curse its foes with terrible misfortune or grant itself uncanny good luck, but not both simultaneously. While resilient to elemental harm and well armored, it lacks resistance to physical damage. The ahd moar is a hardy creature, capable of shrugging off most spells or avoiding them entirely.
23	When an ahd moar fights, it often toys with its opponents, shifting their fortunes suddenly and delighting in their comedy of errors. Taking advantage of its imperfect tactics is the key to victory, as is perseverance. Though it can sabotage even the best efforts to damage it, the ahd moar itself is not extremely lethal. It relies on minions and servants to finish the job.

TALIEN'S NOTES

The fey are subjects of fables both cautionary and aspirational in every culture across the planes. Common threads tie these fables together, pointing toward the existence of singularly powerful creatures that I have dubbed the primeval fey. Perhaps more unsettling, there are implications these are species, not unique individuals. My insatiable curiosity compels me to learn more, but the better part of valor counsels me to tread carefully. Every fey I have ever met followed a rigid code of conduct that was so complex it allowed them to act almost freely. Almost. Finding what few restrictions they have is crucial to an effective encounter.



TACTICS

The ahd moar is a frustrating monster—it is designed to stymie the party's efforts to do just about anything. But it does little damage and depends on its allies to actually defeat the party. It pairs well with simple damage-dealing monsters that don't add additional complexity to the encounter.

Use Alter Reality as often as possible for maximum impact, focusing on disappointing the party. Changing a natural 20 on an attack or saving throw into a 3 or giving the ahd moar a 19 when it rolls a 1 are both memorably frustrating moments. Don't forget to apply the effects of Luck Warping before using Alter Reality—there's no reason to replace a roll if it's going to be changed to 15 or 5 anyway. Use Gift of Luck against parties that will force the ahd moar to attempt many saving throws, and favor Curse of Misfortune against attack-heavy groups of martial characters. Finally, Impossible Odds should be used for laughs with outrageous imagery, but it's also the ahd moar's "get out of jail free" card. This trait allows the ahd moar to get around effects like *forcecage*, dodge critical hits from smiting paladins, or avoid a surprise attack from an assassin.

On its turns, use Unlucky Hex on the first round and when there are no characters under its effects. Otherwise, utilize two Fated Strike attacks with a Fated Healing mixed in if the ahd moar is taking serious damage. Fated Healing is there to prevent the party from taking down the ahd moar with concerted fire before it has a chance to use all its abilities—only use it twice if the party is ignoring all other foes.

If the ahd moar is the only enemy left, it should retreat or negotiate. See the "Treasure" section for details on bargaining with the ahd moar.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Alter Reality every round, and spend more time using Gift of Luck instead of Curse of Misfortune. Giving the ahd moar near-guaranteed successes on saving throws and its own attacks is not as frustrating as stopping the players from ever hitting it, and it's also easier to work around. This does increase its damage substantially, so consider limiting Fated Strike to once per turn, and make sure you choose different targets each round.

Harder Tactics – Alter Reality can be extremely powerful—use it to pick up natural 20s whenever possible. A critical hit from the ahd moar with Gift of Luck active deals 97 damage. Rely on Curse of Misfortune to prevent attacks from hitting, and use Impossible Odds to dodge troublesome spells. Most of the ahd moar's lethality will come from its allies, and your goal is keeping the ahd moar alive long enough to keep the party vulnerable.

PLOT HOOKS

Better Lucky Than Good. Someone can't lose—a conqueror, a politician, or a merchant. It could be anyone, but whatever she tries her hand at, she meets with unparalleled success. An ahd moar follows her around, and rumors of the "coin that walks" spread.

Untimely Fortune. One member of the party attracts an ahd moar. It uses its powers to help from a distance, granting the character success in difficult moments. But how long will its favor last? And why does it want to help?

Unintended Consequences. An ahd moar joins forces with a powerful creature—perhaps a dragon, lich, or storm giant—and together they carve a swathe of bloodshed through the land. Then the ahd moar turns on its former ally, and the creature swears a vendetta against all fey, starting with their descendants: the elves.

TREASURE

Killing an ahd moar yields its coin-like plate, which is made of a naturally occurring mix of gold and platinum worth 15,000 gp. If the party instead lets it live, they can strike a bargain with the fey. Some potential rewards are suggested here, and after a character uses the benefit, the ahd moar can call in a favor of its own (see the "Cost of Power" sidebar for the negative side effects of this arrangement).

- Once within the next year, when the character rolls a d20, the character can choose to replace the rolled number with a natural 20. Once the character has done so, the ahd moar can call in its side of the favor at any time.
- When the character would make an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check, the character can choose to instead roll a d20 and add no modifiers. On a result of 1–10, the roll fails. On a result of 11–20, the roll succeeds. Alternately, the player may flip a coin, with heads representing a success and tails representing a failure. The character can use this ability seven times before the ahd moar can call in its own favor, but the character only knows that there is a limit, not the exact number.
- The next time the character attempts a death saving throw, the character instead treats the result as if it had been a natural 20. The ahd moar can then call in a favor.

AHD MOAR

Large fey, neutral

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 322 (28d10 + 168)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	19 (+4)	22 (+6)	24 (+7)	22 (+6)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Con +12, Wis +12, Cha +13
Skills Insight +18, Perception +12
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed
Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 22
Languages Sylvan
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

TRAITS

Impossible Odds (1/Round). When the ahd moar would be affected by a spell, attack, or other ability, it can choose to be immune to the effect until the end of its next turn. For this to occur, a seemingly random event happens that gets in the way, such as a spellcaster sneezing, a coconut falling out of a clear sky on an attacker's head, or a sudden emergence of gophers.

Luck Warping. At the start of each of its turns, the ahd moar chooses to bend luck to favor itself or vex its enemies. It activates either Curse of Misfortune or Gift of Luck, causing the listed effect until the start of the ahd moar's next turn.

Curse of Misfortune. When any creature within 120 feet of the ahd moar rolls a d20, it instead always rolls a 5.

Gift of Luck. When the ahd moar would roll a d20, it instead always rolls a 15.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ahd moar takes two actions, at least one of which must be from the following options.

Fated Healing. The ahd moar regains 38 (3d20 + 7) hit points.

Fated Strike. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +13 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 38 (3d20 + 7) force damage. If the target is concentrating on a spell, it must roll a d20. If it rolls an 11 or higher, it maintains concentration on the spell. Otherwise, the spell ends immediately.

Unlucky Hex. Two creatures the ahd moar can see within 120 feet of it must succeed on a DC 21 Charisma saving throw or be cursed. While cursed in this way, when the creature deals damage, it uses the minimum possible result on all damage dice and cannot reroll any of the dice. Affected creatures can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on a success. The curse can also be broken via *remove curse* or more powerful magic.

REACTIONS

Alter Reality. The ahd moar has three fated outcomes, each of which begins as 10. As a reaction when the ahd moar or a creature it is aware of rolls a d20, the ahd moar can swap the number rolled with one of its fated outcomes. It then records the original result of the roll, which becomes a new fated outcome that can be used with this feature. All fated outcomes reset to 10 when the ahd moar finishes a long rest.

COST OF POWER

The cost of bargaining with an ahd moar should be extreme and tailored to the character in question. Owing a favor is a flexible, vague plot hook you can draw upon later, and generally you should avoid strong mechanical penalties (like loss of hit points, levels of exhaustion, etc.) and focus on roleplaying opportunities. Here are a few suggestions:

- The character must travel to the fey realm in one year and serve the ahd moar for a period of time either defined up front or left undetermined.
- The character will fail at a crucial moment of the ahd moar's choosing.
- At some point the character will be subjected to an irresistible suggestion effect, forcing the character to obey a command from the ahd moar.

ECOLOGY

An ahd moar spends most of its time in the fey realm, prowling the wilds and delighting in reversing fortunes to turn predator into prey and vice versa. When one finds a portal to the material plane (or to anywhere else), it bounds through, eager to find moments of great significance it can influence with fortunes good or bad. Ahd moar are usually alone, for few creatures can tolerate the sudden reversals that accompany them. This aversion does not stop an ahd moar from seeking out companionship, for who else is it supposed to use its fate-altering abilities upon? These fey prefer indirect dealings, observing their "friends" from afar and altering their fates on a whim. This habit comes not from malice, but from an obsessive and irresistible instinct. Compelling an ahd moar to behave in any manner contrary to this instinct is nearly impossible, as many who have sought eternal luck have learned to their great dismay.

TASEY-AM

Time is a cruel master, and most consider its reign absolute. The most powerful spellcasters can barely imitate the most basic of a tasey-am's powers, which makes their efforts to stop time look like child's play. This fey leaps forward in time, storing temporal energy to unleash a flurry of activity even as it shunts its foes around the timeline and prevents them from attacking it. Simultaneous sightings of a tasey-am in different locations have led to a pair of competing theories: either this fey is not unique, or its control of time is so adept it can literally be in two places at once.

Though it is intelligent and wise, the tasey-am has never shown an interest in negotiation or diplomacy. It seldom speaks, and it acts with silent confidence. Appearing as a runestone leaking mysterious purple gas, tasey-am's form feels unnatural in any setting. Other beings are uneasy in its presence, as though it cannot—or should not—exist in a linear and logical world.

The Tasey-am

Tasey-am, the time-shaper. Not an official sobriquet, but one I'm fond of. I had the unique pleasure of a conversation with the tasey-am, during which it rejected 95 percent of my theories about temporal mechanics. The fact that 5 percent were judged accurate is a feat that would put me in history books, I should think, but that is not what this chapter is about. I remain uncertain as to whether the tasey-am is a unique individual or one of an entire species. I have seen two in the same place, but even sharing a timeline with itself would not be the most impressive accomplishment I have seen the tasey-am perform. The creature has little taste for conversation, and my suggestion if you find yourself the subject of its attentions is to prepare for battle or beat a hasty retreat. Perhaps both.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Clerics, Constitution (High), Range, Rangers, Rogues

Foils: Barbarians, Monks, Single-Target, Spells (With Duration), Wizards

LORE

A character can learn the following information about the tasey-am with an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

TASEY-AM LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Legends of time-warping creatures are both common and unsubstantiated. The fey whisper rumors of the tasey-am, an entity that can move through time in short bursts and appear without rhyme or reason to adjust events in the multiverse. It is said this fey is drawn to situations of great potential in which many outcomes are possible and which would each lead to a drastically different future.
20	The tasey-am's temporal manipulations means it spends little time in a vulnerable position. The fey leaps ahead in time, and when it reappears, it unleashes the stored temporal energy in a series of rapid actions. It is capable of unraveling spells by adjusting their timeline, making long-lasting effects a pointless approach.
25	Though hard to pin down, the tasey-am is not especially resilient nor agile. A fusillade of ranged attacks each time it appears stands a good chance of defeating it. The creature is imbued with a pocket of emergency time, meaning it must be killed twice before it is truly slain.

TACTICS

This fight will feel vastly different from anything you have run before. Between the creature rolling for initiative again every round and its Send Forward ability, it's going to get complicated.

The tasey-am should start by using Send Forward on itself (after making its first Temporal Discorporation attack), moving forward in time 1d4 rounds. After it reappears, start taking its multiple turns. First, use Send Forward on whichever character in the party is dealing the most damage to it, then use Temporal Discorporation repeatedly to dish out serious damage. If there's an ongoing spell that isn't affecting the tasey-am, such as *foresight*, use Draw Out to put an end to it. With a 9th-level spell, a failed saving throw against Draw Out will kill the caster outright. If the tasey-am is targeted by a particularly nasty spell like *disintegrate* or is about to suffer a sneak attack from a rogue, use Stitches in Time to shift the attack to a squishy party member.

Finally, don't forget the tasey-am's Reset trait. It has to be reduced to 0 hit points twice before it's gone for good.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Send Forward immediately, giving the characters time to get their bearings. Using it on party members is fine, because if the tasey-am isn't time-jumping around, the characters will benefit

TASEY-AM

Huge fey, neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 252 (24d12 + 96)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	28 (+9)	20 (+5)	24 (+7)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +15, Con +11, Wis +12, Cha +12
Skills Arcana +19, History +19, Perception +12
Damage Resistances force, necrotic, radiant
Damage Immunities psychic
Condition Immunities exhaustion
Senses truesight 10 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages Sylvan
Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

TRAITS

Adjust Time. At the beginning of each round, the tasey-am rolls for initiative and replaces its current initiative count with the new result. It may instead choose a single creature in the initiative count and force that creature to reroll its initiative and replace its current initiative count with the new result.

Always Ready. The tasey-am cannot be surprised, and attacks made against it cannot have advantage.

Reset (1/Day). When the tasey-am is reduced to 0 hit points it vanishes until the start of the next round. At that point, it reappears in a location of its choice within 120 feet of where it disappeared, recovers all of its missing hit points, and regains any spent uses of Draw Out.

Temporal Acceleration. At the start of the tasey-am's turn, any magical effects within 5 feet of it with a duration immediately end.

Time Traveler. When the tasey-am finishes a long rest, it can choose to travel forward or backward in time, appearing in the same location up to 100 years in the future or past (specific time determined by the tasey-am).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tasey-am uses Temporal Discorporation and can then use either Temporal Discorporation again, Send Forward, or Draw Out.

Draw Out (2/Short or Long Rest). The tasey-am chooses a spell that is affecting itself or a creature it can see, ending the spell immediately. When the spell ends, the caster must attempt a DC 22 saving throw using its spellcasting ability, gaining one level of exhaustion per spell level of the ended spell on a failure, or half as many levels (rounded down) on a success.

Send Forward. The tasey-am sends itself or a creature it can see forward in time 1d4 rounds. The time shift doesn't take effect until the start of the next round, at which point the target disappears and is removed from initiative order. After the rolled number of rounds have elapsed, the target reappears, rolling for initiative and appearing in the space it left or the closest unoccupied space at the beginning of that round. The target may then immediately take a number of consecutive turns equal to the number of rounds it was sent forward, gaining one level of exhaustion for each turn taken in this manner at the end of its last turn. If tasey-am targets itself with this feature, it cannot do so again until it finishes a short rest.

Temporal Discorporation. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target must attempt a DC 22 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the target is teleported up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space the tasey-am can see, gains one level of exhaustion, and immediately expends half of its remaining Hit Dice (rounded up), rolling them and losing that many hit points. A creature with 0 Hit Dice remaining drops to 0 hit points and begins dying. On a success, the creature is not teleported and instead rolls one-quarter of its remaining Hit Dice (rounded up) and loses that many hit points.

REACTIONS

Stitches in Time. As a reaction when the tasey-am is targeted by an attack or spell, it can immediately switch locations with a creature it can see within 60 feet of it, forcing the caster to target that creature instead. This is not a teleportation effect—time is rewritten, and the creature has always been there. The creature attempting to target the tasey-am can use its reaction to attempt a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw to swap and target the tasey-am if it is within range, or intentionally miss the attack or spell if not.

from the extra turns to deal serious damage to the it. Avoid making the fight drag on too long, keeping most of the combat in the here and now.

Harder Tactics – Use Send Forward liberally, especially on the tasey-am's extra turns when it returns from its previous use of Send Forward. Use Temporal Acceleration to end any effects with a duration, not just magical ones. Powerful abilities like a monk's Empty Body are prime targets for this effect. Also use Send Forward at least twice on the tasey-am, once before it uses Reset, and once again immediately after.

PLOT HOOKS

Unfair Advantage. Rumors abound of an assassin who can kill four targets in the same room in the blink of an eye. The assassin has earned the favor of the tasey-am, but to what end?

A Timely Mystery. During a difficult fight, one character is subjected to the tasey-am's Send Forward ability. There is no sign of the fey, and it happens only once. Alternately, one enemy of the party is subjected to Send Forward instead. Either one might help or hinder the party, depending on the situation and the luck of the dice, but it should get them curious about what happened.

Ageless Secrets. There is a legendary dwarven town high in the mountains where the young never grow old. While they are rumored to possess the secret to immortality, the truth is that the dwarves trade an unusual metal mined from the mountain with the tasey-am, who in turn holds back the ravages of time. Many seek to unearth the mystery of the dwarves and steal their secrets.

TREASURE

The essence of the tasey-am can be distilled into a potion of incredible power called *time in a bottle*. This elixir allows the drinker to engage in accelerated action like the tasey-am itself, but it is incredibly difficult to create. A DC 24 Wisdom (Survival) ability check is required to harvest the components successfully, and a DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature) ability check is needed to make the potion. Failure destroys the ingredients. The body of the tasey-am provides just enough essence for one potion—there are no second chances on either check.

Time in a Bottle

Potion, legendary

This shimmering ocher liquid contains tiny particulates that drift in a figure-eight pattern. When imbibed, this potion imbues the drinker with an excess of temporal energy. You can immediately take 1d4 + 1 turns in a row, after which you become stunned until the end of your next turn. A creature can benefit from *time in a bottle* only once in its existence. Drinking a second potion causes the creature to vanish from existence, retroactively erasing all record of them from memory and history, as though they had never existed.

ECOLOGY

The tasey-am exists most commonly in the timestream, traveling across the ages with alarming frequency. It favors the fey realm and the material plane, but it has been sighted on other planes of existence as well. Its temporal manipulations are almost instinctual, but there is an agenda behind every action it takes. Those attempting to predict when the tasey-am will be have found some success through divination magic, noting it consistently appears in areas that undergo rapid change in short periods of time. As humanoids are often most responsible for this type of action, the encounters between the tasey-am and intelligent races have grown more frequent and dangerous.

ANCIENT FAERIE DRAGON

The common (and diminutive) faerie dragon is not what most veteran adventurers consider a lethal threat. Annoying, yes. Not to be underestimated, of course. But a deadly foe? Hardly. Even though they grow more powerful with age, they never approach the might of a true dragon. Or so most people believe. Truly ancient faerie dragons, as old as the first creatures to walk the realms, are a terror to behold. Though they retain their mischievous spirit and love of pranks, they possess incredible physical strength, magical defenses, and a breath weapon that melts the psyche of its victims.

The Ancient Faerie Dragon

I had a common faerie dragon as a roommate once. That was a strange year. She told me of a great discovery she made in the depths of the library: a ritual to allow a faerie dragon to achieve full maturity. I assumed she had already done so, as she had the violet coat expected of a faerie dragon of her age, but she was convinced there was yet untapped potential in her fey-touched blood. At her request, I won't reveal her name, but I will tell you she succeeded in her pursuit and is among the most powerful beings I have ever encountered. I hope she attends our alma mater's next reunion.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Charmed (Protection from), Clerics, Paladins, Truesight, Wizards

Foils: Druids, Intelligence (Low), Range, Rangers, Warlocks

ANCIENT FAERIE DRAGON

Huge fey, neutral

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)
Hit Points 400 (32d12 + 192)
Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	19 (+4)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	28 (+9)	28 (+9)

Saving Throws Str +16, Dex +11, Con +13, Int +12, Wis +16, Cha +16
Skills Deception +23, Insight +16, Nature +12, Perception +16, Survival +16
Damage Resistances psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, stunned
Senses blindsight 60 ft., truesight 10 ft., passive Perception 26
Languages Draconic, Sylvan
Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

TRAITS

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

Prismatic Coat. At the start of each of the dragon's turns, roll a d6 and compare the result to the following list. The dragon's scales and feathers adopt the indicated color, and it gains the corresponding benefits which last until the start of the dragon's next turn.

1 — **Red** — The dragon becomes immune to fire damage, and its attacks deal maximum damage to targets wearing medium armor.

2 — **Orange** — The dragon becomes immune to thunder damage, and its breath weapon deals maximum damage.

3 — **Yellow** — The dragon becomes immune to lightning damage, and its attacks deal maximum damage to targets wearing heavy armor.

4 — **Green** — The dragon becomes immune to acid damage, and its attacks deal maximum damage to targets wearing light armor.

5 — **Blue** — The dragon becomes immune to cold damage, and its attacks deal maximum damage to targets wearing no armor.

6 — **Violet** — The dragon gains resistance to all damage, and it can take a second action on its turn.

Seeing Double. When the dragon rolls for initiative, it creates an illusory duplicate in an unoccupied space it can see within 60 feet of it, and then both the dragon and its duplicate can teleport up to 60 feet to unoccupied spaces the dragon can see. When the dragon attacks or uses its Breath Weapon, it can choose to have the ability originate from its true location or the illusion's location, and characters moving away from the illusion provoke opportunity attacks as normal. When the dragon moves, the illusion moves an equivalent distance as directed by the dragon. Both the dragon and its illusion react identically when either one is attacked, giving no clues as to which is genuine.

This illusory duplicate is indistinguishable from the real dragon even to creatures with truesight. The only way to tell them apart for certain is for a creature that can see the dragon or the duplicate to use an action or a bonus action to attempt a DC 24 Intelligence (Investigation) ability check. On a success, the character identifies which one is an illusion and retains this knowledge for as long as at least one of the dragons can be seen. Characters with truesight have advantage on this check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes one Horn Slam attack, two Chromatic Claw attacks, and one Tail Whip attack. If available, it can replace its Horn Slam attack with its Breath Weapon.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales a 60-foot-long cone of mind-melting energy. Creatures in the cone must succeed on a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 66 (12d10) psychic damage and be charmed by the dragon. While charmed in this manner, a creature must take an action on each of its turns to grapple the nearest ally other than the dragon. If it is already grappling an ally, the creature instead does everything in its power to maintain the grapple.

Chromatic Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d8 + 9) magical slashing damage, and the target must immediately expend two spell slots of its choice (if available).

Horn Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (4d12 + 9) magical bludgeoning damage, and the target is teleported up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space of the dragon's choice.

Tail Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 31 (4d10 + 9) magical bludgeoning damage, the target is grappled (escape DC 24), and the dragon learns a single secret the creature knows that it has shared with no one (when applicable). While grappled in this way, the target is restrained and the dragon cannot Tail Whip another target.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon 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. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Dazzling Chroma. All creatures within 10 feet of the dragon or its illusion must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.

Phase Shift (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon and its illusory double teleport up to 60 feet to unoccupied spaces the dragon can see.

Swipe. The dragon makes a Chromatic Claw attack.

Ancient faerie dragons undergo a maturation process in the fey realms that turns them from dragons into true fey. They exist between the ecological and cosmological niches of both creatures, possessing the draconic instinct for hoarding treasure and a massive ego combined with a fey's love of manipulation and deceit. Each ancient faerie dragon follows its own philosophy, with unique goals and a code of conduct. These take precedence over any moral beliefs, and if the party wishes to entreat a favor from an ancient faerie dragon, they had best learn what it wants and help it get that. No other approach will work.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an ancient faerie dragon with an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (History), or Intelligence (Nature) ability check.

ANCIENT FAERIE DRAGON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Most faerie dragons are tiny tricksters, but they have the potential to get bigger. Much bigger. These colorful dragons are eventually called to the fey realm where they undergo a metamorphosis that turns them into true fey. They develop massively increased strength and magical abilities but retain their love of tricks and mischief tempered with a draconic affinity for schemes. Their talent for deception is unmatched.
22	The dragon's scales shift in hue as the battle progresses, granting it immunity to some types of damage and empowering its attacks to tear through a particular kind of armor. The dragon can grapple foes with its prehensile tail, and doing so allows it to learn their deepest secrets. Ancient faerie dragons are hard to hit, tough to bring down, and incredibly resistant to spells and other magical effects. They have no weaknesses.
26	Ancient faerie dragons project an illusory duplicate in battle that defies detection. Both the dragon and its duplicate are highly mobile, and it can project its breath weapon and even use its teeth and claws from the illusion's location. The faerie dragon's breath weapon targets the intellect of its victims, and only those of keen mind can discern the true nature of the dragon's illusory duplicate.

TACTICS

Don't forget to roll a d6 at the start of each of the dragon's turns for its Prismatic Coat trait. It can be tricky to remember to apply the maximum damage effect for specific types of armor, so consider writing in the margins of the initiative tracker, noting what kind of armor each character is wearing so you're reminded of it when you pick your targets.

When the fight begins, place the illusory duplicate near spellcasters and other ranged attackers. Initially, you want to keep the real faerie dragon some distance away from the party, encouraging them to think that one is real. Then, on the faerie dragon's first turn, use its Breath Weapon and attack from the illusion's location, spreading doubt about which one is real. Focus the dragon's attacks on whichever characters are vulnerable to the damage bonus from its Prismatic Coat trait, and when its Breath Weapon recharges save it until the dragon's coat shifts to an orange hue and empowers it to deal maximum damage.

For the dragon's legendary actions, generally you want to use Dazzling Chroma once each round, and then Swipe twice. Give the party one or two rounds after they identify which dragon is real before using Phase Shift.

Easier Tactics – Avoid using the dragon's Breath Weapon until a few rounds into the fight, and then use it again when it recharges as long as the dragon doesn't have an orange coat. After two total uses, don't use Breath Weapon again. Target inefficiently with the dragon's attacks, spreading them out so only some of them target characters who are going to take maximum damage.

Harder Tactics – Position the illusion aggressively, and on rounds when the dragon's Breath Weapon isn't available, use Horn Slam to move a character 30 feet away from the party. Pursue with the dragon or the illusion (or both), and repeat the process to split the party. You can also grapple a character with the dragon's tail and then fly away with the captive. This is particularly effective if the illusion does the grappling, because spells cast on it to push it away or otherwise break the grapple will have no effect.

PLOT HOOKS

An Unusual Compass. The party finds a massive feather that shifts through all the colors of the rainbow. If placed on the ground it spins and points in a particular direction, almost urging them onward. Is their destination an ancient faerie dragon's lair, or something the dragon wants them to deal with?

Angry Customer. An ancient faerie dragon accosts the party, claiming one of their magic items belongs to its hoard and must be returned or purchased. The faerie dragon has a favor in mind to pay for the item, and it's entirely at your discretion whether it's telling the truth or lying to their faces.

Prank War. Two ancient faerie dragons vie for control of a portion of the material plane, but not through conflict. They manipulate mortals into staging ever more elaborate pranks, starting with the presentation of a burning leather satchel full of excrement and escalating to the construction of a warship filled with bees. While amusing, it's only a matter of time before nearby societies collapse as their workforce devotes all their time and energy to the schemes of the dragons.

TREASURE

The body of an ancient faerie dragon yields raw materials worth 48,000 gp. Rather than selling them, these can be used to create a suit of *feyscale armor*. In addition to the protection it offers to body and mind, it can project an illusory duplicate that mimics some of the faerie dragon's

own tricks. Creating the suit of armor requires a gifted blacksmith and enchanter, and any other conditions the DM deems appropriate.

Feyscale Armor

Armor (scale mail), legendary (requires attunement)

The scales and feathers of an ancient faerie dragon can be used to create a suit of potent defensive armor. While wearing this armor you have a +2 bonus to AC, you are immune to the frightened condition, and you have resistance to psychic damage.

As a bonus action, you can conjure an illusory duplicate of yourself in an unoccupied space you can see within 30 feet. The duplicate is indistinguishable from you even to creatures with truesight until it would take damage. Even after the duplicate's true nature is revealed, when you attack or cast a spell, you can choose to have the effect originate from the duplicate's location instead of your own. Creatures moving away from your duplicate provoke opportunity attacks as normal. The duplicate lasts for 1 minute. Once you have used this ability, you cannot do so again you finish a long rest.

ECOLOGY

Ancient faerie dragons prowl the fey realm and material plane looking for a good time. They thrive on manipulating and deceiving mortals, and they find those on the material plane most entertaining. They have a strong sense of humor and often crack jokes, taking great offense if their audience doesn't laugh—not enough offense to respond with immediate violence, but it does sour any attempt at negotiation. When not laughing at their own antics, these dragons artistically decorate the areas around their lairs, with a preference for bright, clashing colors. A faerie dragon will typically fill the areas around its home with dozens of false lairs filled with traps, mazes, and other colossal wastes of time. Nothing gives these dragons greater pleasure than watching would-be looters spends days—if not weeks—searching for loot only to come up empty-handed. An ancient faerie dragon's real home is always in a comfy, beautiful location where it can live in perpetual joy, surrounded by things that bring it pleasure.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing an ancient faerie dragon's lair is warped by its magic, creating the following effects.

- When the faerie dragon touches a structure or an object that isn't being held or worn, it can choose to change any number of the colors of the target to colors of its choice.
- Creatures in the area have advantage on Charisma ability checks when telling jokes or making insults.
- Within the dragon's lair, creatures can always hear its laughs.

If the dragon dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.

Primordial Destroyers

Giants speak of a time when even they were small, mere children in the eyes of a royal line which held absolute authority. Known as the worldsmiths, these giants are ancient beings from when the world was young. When the smiths first awoke, the universe was a chaotic storm of matter. Only through great violence could it be forced into order, a task they took to with unrivaled zeal. Once their mission was complete, the smiths looked about in dissatisfaction. While the results of their effort were good, surely they could do better. With a relentless dedication to perfection, the smiths began to unmake the worlds they had helped create, much to the horror of those who had come to live there. They were no longer worthy of their former titles; the primordial destroyers tore entire planets apart until they were stopped by force. Obsolete and dangerous, the nature of a primordial destroyer is not compatible with the relatively peaceful world. Blessedly few in number, the destroyers bide their time, waiting for the next opportunity to complete their work.

The Primordial Thunderking

Haloa's people have a saying: "Where thunder walks, mountains fall." I wasn't sure what it meant until I witnessed a primordial thunderking pulverize a dwarven stronghold into rubble. These creatures are the perfect fusion of flesh and elemental energies, seamless and brutal in its symbiosis. Their breath is a perpetual hurricane that follows wherever they tread, and their weapon can channel the power of thunder into the earth itself. These creatures existed before my people were even a twinkle in our god's eyes, and they care nothing for what we have wrought. They seek to restore the realms to their basest materials—a pure base on which they can forge this world anew.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Elite

Favors: Area-of-Effect, Druids, Flight, Sorcerers, Wizards

Foils: Fighters, Mobility (Low), Paladins, Rangers, Weapons (Ranged)

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING

Towering over the landscape at a height of over 100 feet, a primordial thunderking lives with its head in the clouds. Surrounded by a perpetual storm of devastating power, each thunderking is humanoid in shape but incredibly stout and muscular. Their flowing black hair is never cut, sweeping about them and crackling with static electricity. Their eyes glow an electric blue, and their deep voices deafen any who stand too close. Thunderkings have no need of armor, wielding a single massive weapon that can cleave entire buildings in two.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a primordial thunderking with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING LORE

DC	INFORMATION
20	An ancient species of giant with tremendous elemental power, a thunderking is far larger than a tarrasque and nearly as dangerous. They bring the hurricane, each step pulverizing the ground like thunder while lightning splits the sky.
25	While thunderkings are mighty, they are not invincible. Crippling their limbs can reduce their combat potential, but to finish one off you must go for the heart or head. The storm is theirs to command, so you will be subjected to lots of lightning, cold, and thunder in battle against them.
30	Staying close to a thunderking is suicide for all but the most robust of heroes. Those who stay at range pelting the creature with powerful magic can avoid the worst of its power, but no one is truly safe from a thunderking's wrath. With a complete inability to dispel magical effects and spells, a thunderking can only stand its ground against magically enhanced heroes.

TACTICS

A thunderking does not do battle so much as get to work. It is in the business of demolition, and everything it does is in service to that goal. There is no way to prevent catastrophic collateral damage with any conflict involving a thunderking. The mechanics of a thunderking represent its ponderous and massive nature. Each of its sections take a turn on a

fixed initiative count, with the creature being so big it is unable to take all its actions on a single turn. Starting with the head/body section, use Towering Thunderhead's Sleet and Hail option to deal constant damage to everything that dares get close to the thunderking. Once the thunderking has been engaged, alternate between Hurricane Winds, Lightning Strike, and Rolling Thunder. Have the thunderking treat the attackers like pests until its take serious damage, instead focusing on destruction of everything around it. Use the left arm to grab and Throw characters out of the battlefield and the legs to keep the surprisingly swift thunderking out of range of slow melee characters. If one of the thunderking's sections reaches 0 hit points, it will consider the characters a primary threat and focus all efforts on destroying them.

Easier Tactics – Have the thunderking ignore the players until it has no other choice. Never use the Rolling Thunder option from Towering Thunderhand, and don't blast the entire party with Voice of Thunder unless they are all likely to survive. Finally, don't Throw characters too far away from the giant, instead hurling them straight into the ground or straight up.

Harder Tactics – The thunderking should be fully aware of any characters well before they get within range of its truesight and will start combat as soon as it becomes aware of their presence. The giant is no fool and will immediately focus its attacks upon the characters with overwhelming force. Open with Voice of Thunder, followed with Two-Handed Fighting and a Cleaving Strike. The thunderking is a master of collateral damage and should always try to include as many targets as possible (including those not attacking it), such as innocent characters, buildings, and other victims.

PLOT HOOKS

Time to Wake Up. A clan of frost giants are brewing a massive batch of magical mead in hopes of awakening a dormant primordial thunderking sleeping within a glacier. They have traded everything they could spare for brewing supplies and stolen what they could not afford.

Lonesome Gregor. A thunderking named Gregorivarstanistaval (Gregor for short) roams the world in search of his kin. The giant is too depressed from loneliness to engage in the destructive goals of his people, but incidentally causes quite a bit of damage wherever he goes. The smaller peoples of the world hope a more peaceful solution can be found rather than anger the sad giant.

March of the Giants. Storm, frost, and stone giants have joined the cause of a thunderqueen who seeks to remake an entire continent to better suit her and her lesser kin. Under the thunderqueen's leadership, the giants are unstoppable, with primordial destroyers serving on the front line of every major conflict.

TALIEN'S NOTES

Creation and destruction are two fundamentals of the multiverse. What is made must someday be unmade. I just didn't think my world's unmaking would come at the hands of a 200-foot-tall volcano giant. These primordial destroyers bear only a distant relationship to their smaller cousins but are understandably revered for their power and size. Anything that can make a storm giant look small deserves respect. Wherever these giants choose to tread, destruction follows. Their power is ancient, from a time when the universe was unstable and without limits. I have yet to encounter any other creatures from that era, and when (or if) the last destroyer dies, a significant piece of living history will be forever lost.

TREASURE

Much of what a thunderking carries is simply too large for humanoids to make good use of. The inverse is also true for the thunderking, who has little use for tiny coins, a magical sword, or a swanky toothpick beyond its own curiosity. However, once slain, the corpse of a thunderking has a tremendous impact on the environment, taking years to fully decompose and leaving behind only massive teeth and bones. Its size makes these bones useful in construction, and any structure that integrates at least twenty thunderking bones into its architecture becomes magical, gaining resistance to all damage. Additionally, creatures that sleep within the structure dream of epic thunderstorms and occasionally receive cryptic visions of apocalyptic events yet to transpire.

ECOLOGY

A thunderking is too big for most worlds, and its presence has a destructive impact on the environment. These creatures are revered for their strength and power, with other giant races possessing a peculiar deference to their authority. Most thunderkings choose exile rather than unmake their creations, paralyzed by a deep melancholy. They can be found in the most inhospitable mountains or on remote islands, where their destructive power is of no consequence. While they hold no hatred for lesser creatures, the short, trivial lives of such beings are of little concern. When roused, a thunderking is a tour de force able to obliterate entire nations single-handedly. Once it has set its mind to something, a thunderking is almost impossible to dissuade, often to the dismay of creatures who are unfortunate enough to stand in its way.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region around a primordial thunderking is transformed by its elemental energies, which creates one or more of the following effects within 50 miles of wherever the thunderking finishes a long rest.

- When the thunderking sleeps, its snores can be heard throughout the entire area.
- Spells that deal thunder or lightning damage always deal maximum damage.
- A chill wind always blows throughout the area, and each night the temperature drops below freezing.

If the thunderking leaves the area of these effects, they fade over the course of 1d10 days.



PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING

Titanic giant, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points special
Speed special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	14 (+2)	30 (+10)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +17, Con +17, Wis +11, Cha +11
Skills Athletics +17, History +17, Perception +11
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, lightning, thunder
Condition Immunities paralyzed, restrained, unconscious
Senses truesight 240 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Giant, Primordial
Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

TRAITS

Titanic Creature. The thunderking is a Titanic creature which is so large that combat involves dividing its body up into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the thunderking if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the thunderking's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the thunderking is slain, which causes the section to die along with the thunderking. If a section has a speed, the thunderking can move up to that section's speed during the section's turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the thunderking, which is considered difficult terrain, and the thunderking cannot make opportunity attacks. Finally, attempts to forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport the thunderking or any of its parts automatically fail.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING – HEAD AND BODY

Hit Points 266 (13d20 + 130)
Initiative Count 20

TRAITS

Bastion of the Mind. Effects that would attempt to influence the thunderking's mind (such as psychic damage, the stunned and unconscious conditions, or effects that force an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned, or unconscious, all the other sections are as well.

Eye of the Storm. When this section is reduced to 0 hit points, the thunderking is slain. If any of the thunderking's other sections have at least 1 hit point, this section has resistance to all damage.

Position. The head and body of the thunderking is at least 60 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 20 feet wide, 40 feet tall and 20 feet deep.

Towering Thunderhead. The thunderking transforms the weather within 5 miles of it into a perpetual thunderstorm. At the start of each of this section's turns, it may cause one of the following effects within the storm's area. The thunderking cannot cause the same effect twice in a row.

- **Hurricane Winds.** Until the start of this section's next turn, hurricane-force winds sweep the area. Arrows, bolts, and other ordinary projectiles fired from ranged weapons are blown off course and automatically miss. Additionally, the area is considered difficult terrain for flying creatures.
- **Lightning Strike.** A bolt of lightning descends from the sky, impacting a point of the thunderking's choice within the area. Creatures within 10 feet of the impact point must attempt a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) lightning damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.
- **Rolling Thunder.** Peals of thunder resonate throughout the area. Creatures in the area not immune to thunder damage must succeed on DC 21 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn.
- **Sleet and Hail.** Thick hailstones rain down throughout the area. Everything exposed to the sky takes 17 (5d6) cold damage.

ACTIONS

Mighty Resilience. If any section of the thunderking is affected by an effect that would allow it to attempt a saving throw at the start or end of its turn to end the effect, it may immediately attempt that saving throw.

Search. The thunderking attempts a Wisdom (Perception) ability check.

Voice of Thunder (Recharge 5–6). The thunderking bellows at a deafening volume in a 500-foot cone. Each creature in the area must attempt a DC 21 Constitution saving throw, taking 90 (20d8) thunder damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING – LEFT ARM

Hit Points 184 (9d20 + 90)
Initiative Count 15

TRAITS

Position. The left arm of the thunderking is positioned on the left side of its body and head and is typically 70 feet up immediately to the left of the space the thunderking occupies. The arm occupies a cube approximately 40 feet tall, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet deep.

ACTIONS

Crush. The arm squeezes a creature it is grappling. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take bludgeoning damage equal to half its hit point maximum.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 40 ft., all creatures within 10 ft. of the target. *Hit:* 62 (8d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

Throw. The arm hurls a creature or object it is holding up to 200 feet away from it. If a solid object or surface would prevent this movement, the thrown object or creature takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet of movement prevented.

Two-Handed Fighting. Until the start of this section's next turn, when the thunderking makes a melee weapon attack, it deals an extra 30 damage on a successful hit.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING – LEGS

Hit Points 225 (11d20 + 110)
Initiative Count 10
Speed 80 ft.

TRAITS

Mighty Tread. When the thunderking moves through or enters another creature's space, it can choose to force that creature to attempt a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 36 (4d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. A creature cannot take damage from this feature more than once per turn.

Position. The legs of the thunderking are positioned at the base of its space, which is typically a 30-foot-by-30-foot square. The thunderking's legs are approximately 60 feet tall.

Powerful Strides. The thunderking ignores difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Leap. The thunderking jumps a distance and height up to its speed. The thunderking destroys any nonmagical structures completely within the space where it lands.

PRIMORDIAL THUNDERKING – RIGHT ARM

Hit Points 184 (9d20 + 90)
Initiative Count 5

TRAITS

Position. The right arm of the thunderking is positioned on the right side of its body and head and is typically 70 feet up immediately to the right of the space the thunderking occupies. The arm occupies a cube approximately 40 feet tall, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet deep.

ACTIONS

Cleaving Strike. The arm makes a single Titan Blade attack against each creature of its choice within its reach. On a successful hit, the attack deals half damage.

Devastation. The arm thrusts its blade into the ground, channeling the fury of the storm into the earth. Each Huge or smaller creature within 1 mile of the thunderking must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. Nonmagical structures within the area collapse, and the entire area becomes difficult terrain.

Lightning Surge. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +11 to hit, range 300 ft., one target. *Hit:* 78 (12d12) lightning damage and the target's speed becomes 0 until the start of its next turn.

Titan Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 79 (10d12 + 14) slashing damage.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER

Like a volcano brought to life, a primordial ashcaller is a titanic giant that threatens to reduce all in its path to burning ruin. At 150 feet tall, an ashcaller dominates the landscape. From its back erupt meteors that smite the land, while the rest of its body is layered in massive plates of armor. Its right arm hefts a colossal shield that can obscure even the ashcaller's impressive bulk, while its right hand unleashes magical fire on an apocalyptic scale. The skin of an ashcaller is a dull obsidian color, its massive eyes like smoldering coals. Ashcallers are completely hairless, and their voices roars like an open furnace. The fires produced by an ashcaller burn supernaturally hot, able to melt steel, stone, and flesh in equal measure.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a primordial ashcaller with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
22	Nothing can survive the flames of a primordial ashcaller, which burn hotter than any natural fire. These giants unleash potent destructive magics between eruptions like a living volcano, all of which result in catastrophic damage to everything around them.
27	Ashcallers wear heavy armor and wield massive shields that protect them from ranged attacks. They are able to draw power from burning creatures, objects, and structures, channeling the gathered energy into a devastating cone of flame.
32	The range of an ashcaller's abilities is unrivaled, so don't expect to be safe by staying at a distance. Cover can provide some reprieve from the flames of an ashcaller, but nonmagical cover is unlikely to last long.

TACTICS

Ashcallers are efficient opponents, typically unleashing their most powerful effects early to gauge the worthiness of those they face. A single *meteor swarm* is often enough to clean out paltry enemies while still wounding powerful foes. An ashcaller will attempt to stay at range for as long as possible, using its Shield Slam and Bulldoze actions to disrupt melee characters. An ashcaller should light as many fires as possible using its Worldflame action, hoping to set up a Call the Flame action for an optimal turn. Remember that creatures that would be immune to fire damage instead have resistance against the ashcaller. Try to spread the ashcaller's damage out as much as possible between characters. It's going to be too much to handle for all but the most dedicated healers to keep up with, and it ensures the characters stay on the defensive. Just when the characters think they have things under control, unleash Call the Flame for maximum collateral damage. Even if the characters survive the effect, their confidence will definitely be shaken.

The Primordial Ashcaller

While all the primordial destroyers are inherently dangerous to everything around them, only the ashcaller enjoys the suffering it inflicts. With a temperament worse than the most cantankerous fire giant, ashcallers see the world in simple terms: burned and unburned. Their hatred for our world is all too clear, and I trust an ashcaller to never pass up an opportunity for mayhem. Perhaps they were always this malevolent, or perhaps the sting of their failures has embittered them over millennia. Whatever the cause, these giants must be met with violence at every opportunity, for any peace brokered is temporary at best.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Elite

Favors: Antimagic, Barbarians, Bards, Fire (Protection from), Wizards

Foils: Dexterity (Low), Fighters, Rangers, Warlocks

Easier Tactics – Give the ashcaller lots of other targets to burn, affording the characters time to get close. Once engaged in melee, turn the giant's attention to the characters. At this range, the characters will be able to support downed teammates and mitigate the ashcaller's most powerful effects. Refrain from using Call the Flame until the very end of the fight as a last, desperate attack by the ashcaller.

Harder Tactics – Keep the ashcaller within 300 feet of the characters, and use the head and body's Intensify action. Note that a creature can have resistance and vulnerability to a damage type at the same time (effectively negating resistance). Unleash hell against affected enemies, with *meteor swarm* and the legs' Molten Slag trait being optimal ways to capitalize on the effect. Use Bulldoze to separate party members and Violent Eruption to down targets who are low on hit points.

PLOT HOOKS

Tools of Creation. From within a remote volcano, the sound of a titanic smith's hammer echoes for leagues. Within is a primordial ashcaller, hard at work forging a mysterious artifact for an unknown purpose. Apart from the cacophonous noise, the giant is bothering no one, but given the nature of such creatures, public concern and curiosity are swiftly mounting.

The Cauldron. Without warning, a primordial ashcaller emerges from the earth and reduces a 20-mile area into a molten crater. Within the fiery hellscape the ashcaller is founding a civilization of beings infused with elemental fire, calling its nation "The Cauldron."

Holding a Grudge. For more than a millennium, a thunderking and an ashcaller have been bitter rivals. Each believes the other to be responsible for their race's ancient failures, with the feud ever escalating across the centuries. Something must be done before the two titans take their conflict to the next level and begin marching against each other.

TREASURE

The armor and shield of an ashcaller can supply enough raw metal to equip an army, but the true treasure is an ashcaller's molten core. A unique organ that produces the volcanic meteors that erupt from an ashcaller's back, the molten core can be surgically removed with a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check. These objects make for some of the most powerful known siege weapons and are prized by warlords for their amazing destructive potential. A molten core can be used similarly to siege equipment when mounted on tracks or wheels and has the following statistics.

Molten Core

Huge Object

Armor Class 21
Hit Points 300
Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

A molten core is a magical ball of molten stone that launches flaming meteors. Before it can be fired, it must be loaded by feeding it solid stone and then aimed by directing the meteors with metal barrels (much like a cannon). It takes one action to load the weapon, one action to aim it, and one action to fire it.

Eruption Cannon. The molten core launches up to five meteors which arc to different points within 500 feet of the weapon, no two of which may be within 30 feet of each other. Anything within 15 feet of one of those points must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (5d6) fire damage and 17 (5d6) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a success.

ECOLOGY

Ashcallers cannot abide the pathetic softness of most worlds, preferring realms of fire, stone, and steel. There is little room for diplomacy and society in an ashcaller's eyes. Even the least degenerate beings (essentially those most like itself) are still spawned from a flawed universe and are disposable agents at best. The best way to protect oneself from an ashcaller's wrath is to make it happy, and ashcallers are only happy when they are forging new tools of destruction. With potent magic and millennia of experience, ashcallers can spend centuries in their titanic foundries, beating material into shape with their bare hands. The fruit of such a labor is always an artifact of astounding power, a reflection of the perfection ashcallers seek to bring about in the world. In rare cases, an ashcaller may deem a lesser creature worthy of wielding their creations, empowering those who share their misanthropic worldview. In conversation ashcallers are always dour and spiteful, never passing an opportunity to demean those beneath them (which is pretty much everyone). Even gods can expect little respect from these giants, who see most divinities as glorified personifications of a flawed existence.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region around a primordial ashcaller is transformed by its elemental energies, which creates one or more of the following effects within 20 miles of wherever the ashcaller lairs for at least 1 continuous year.

- The environmental temperature never drops below 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER

Titanic giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 23 (natural armor, titan greatshield)
Hit Points special
Speed special

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	17 (+3)	30 (+10)	16 (+3)	24 (+7)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +18, Wis +15, Cha +10
Skills Athletics +18, Insight +15, Perception +15
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities fire
Condition Immunities paralyzed, restrained, unconscious
Senses truesight 240 ft., passive Perception 25
Languages Common, Giant
Challenge 26 (90,000 XP)

TRAITS

Purging Flames. If a creature would be immune to fire damage dealt by the ashcaller, it instead has resistance to the damage.

Titanic Creature. The ashcaller is a titanic creature which is so large that combat involves dividing its body up into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the ashcaller if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the ashcaller's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the ashcaller is slain, which causes the section to die along with the ashcaller. If a section has a speed, the ashcaller can move up to that section's speed during the section's turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the ashcaller, which is considered difficult terrain, and the ashcaller cannot make opportunity attacks. Finally, attempts to forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport the ashcaller or any of its parts automatically fail.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER – HEAD AND BODY

Hit Points 410 (20d20 + 200)
Initiative Count 20

TRAITS

Bastion of the Mind. Effects that would attempt to influence the ashcaller's mind (such as psychic damage, the stunned and unconscious conditions, or effects that force an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned, or unconscious, all the other sections are as well.

Position. The head and body of the ashcaller is at least 90 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 25 feet wide, 60 feet tall, and 25 feet deep.

Violent Eruption. At the start of this section's turns, it may erupt with volcanic fury. When it does so, up to five volcanic meteors arc to different points within 500 feet of the ashcaller, no two of which may be within 30 feet of each other. Anything within 15 feet of one of those points must attempt a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) fire damage and 17 (5d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

Volcanic Heart. When this section is reduced to 0 hit points, the ashcaller is slain. If any of the ashcaller's other sections have at least 1 hit point, this section has resistance to damage.

Additionally, a creature that touches this section or hits it with a melee attack takes 22 (5d8) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Intensify. The ashcaller's body radiates incredible heat in a 300-foot-radius sphere that moves with the ashcaller and lasts until the start of this section's next turn. Everything other than the ashcaller in the area is vulnerable to fire damage.

Mighty Resilience. If any section of the ashcaller is subjected to an effect that would allow it to attempt a saving throw at the start or end of its turn to end the effect, it may immediately attempt that saving throw.

Search. The ashcaller attempts a Wisdom (Perception) ability check.

Worldflame. The ashcaller speaks words of primordial destruction, which can be heard up to 1 mile away. Creatures and flammable objects within earshot catch fire for 1 minute, taking 9 (2d8) fire damage at the start of each of their turns (when applicable). The fire cannot be extinguished by nonmagical means.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER – LEGS

Hit Points 287 (14d20 + 140)
Initiative Count 10
Speed 120 ft.

TRAITS

Mighty Tread. When the ashcaller moves through or enters another creature's space, it can choose to force that creature to attempt a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 36 (4d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. A creature cannot take damage from this feature more than once per turn.

Position. The legs of the ashcaller are positioned at the base of its space, which is typically a 40-foot-by-40-foot square. The ashcaller's legs are approximately 90 feet tall.

Powerful Strides. The ashcaller is immune to difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Molten Slag. The ashcaller melts the ground in its space, converting it into molten slag. The area becomes difficult terrain, and whenever a creature first enters the area or ends its turn there it takes 65 (10d12) fire damage. Objects not being carried or worn and structures completely in an area of slag created by this feature are instantly destroyed.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER – RIGHT ARM

Hit Points 266 (13d20 + 130)
Initiative Count 5

TRAITS

Position. The right arm of the ashcaller is positioned on the right side of its body and head and is typically 110 feet up immediately to the right of the space the ashcaller occupies. The arm occupies a cube approximately 70 feet tall, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet deep.

Titan Greatshield. While this section is not incapacitated, the ashcaller has a +5 bonus to its AC (included in its statistics) and partial cover against ranged attacks. Additionally, attacks made with the shield are magical.

ACTIONS

Bulldoze. The ashcaller moves up to 100 feet in a straight line. The first time it enters a creature's space during this move, the creature must attempt a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful saving throw, a creature is able to move out of the ashcaller's path. On a failed saving throw, a creature is pushed ahead of the ashcaller for the rest of the move, takes 45 (10d8) bludgeoning damage, and is knocked prone.

Shield Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (4d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or be knocked unconscious until the end of its next turn.

- An active volcano forms within the area, shaped into a magical forge whose eruptions provide molten metals of all types. An ashcaller can use this forge to craft completely metal magical weapons and armor of astounding craftmanship (typically at least *very rare* in quality), with the volcano providing rare metals for the ashcaller to use. If an ashcaller lairs near this volcano for 500 years, it can forge a single *artifact* from the materials provided by the volcano.
- The ashcaller is aware of any magical effects that lower the temperature below 120 degrees Fahrenheit, along with the precise location and nature of the effect (such as if it's from a spell, magical effect, or natural source).

If the ashcaller leaves the area of these effects for a continuous month, they fade over the course of 1d10 days.

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER

With the swiftness of an eagle and the towering might of a mountain, a primordial worldbreaker is the ultimate expression of martial power. The creators of the secret giant monastic tradition known as the Way of the Worldbreaker, these giants can reduce anything in their path into utter oblivion with a single blow from their titanic fists. A typical worldbreaker is more than 200 feet tall. Where most giants would be girthy, a worldbreaker is svelte, rippling with finely honed muscles that leave no doubt as to their strength. Most worldbreakers wear simple, revealing garb which puts their bodies on display. Each is heavily tattooed with magical inscriptions, believed to enhance their already destructive power. A worldbreaker's skin is like unworked steel, and their eyes glitter with the deepest blues.

PRIMORDIAL ASHCALLER – LEFT ARM

Hit Points 276 (13d20 + 140)
Initiative Count 15

TRAITS

Innate Spellcasting. The ashcaller's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 23, +15 to hit with spell attacks). The ashcaller can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components. The range of spells the ashcaller casts in this manner is always 300 feet.

At will (6th level): *blight*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*
3/day: *earthquake*, *fire storm*
1/day: *meteor swarm*

Position. The left arm of the ashcaller is positioned on the left side of its body and head and is typically 110 feet up immediately to the left of the space the ashcaller occupies. The arm occupies a cube approximately 70 feet tall, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet deep.

ACTIONS

Call the Flame. The ashcaller extinguishes all fires in a 500-foot radius, gathering their power in its fist. If the ashcaller gathered enough flames (typically equivalent to a burning town), the next time the ashcaller takes this action, it may unleash the gathered flames in a 500-foot cone of blue fire. Everything in the area must attempt a DC 23 Constitution saving throw, taking 110 (20d10) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a success.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a primordial worldbreaker with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
25	The oldest and most powerful of the primordial destroyers, the worldbreakers can shatter entire planes in two with their martial arts. Under no circumstances should they ever be provoked. Should you be slain by their hand, there will be no body left to bury.
30	A worldbreaker specializes in absolute destruction. They can disintegrate anything they touch, with only powerful magical items able to survive contact. A worldbreaker's martial arts are uniquely dangerous, dealing catastrophic damage with every blow. Their bodies generate a near infinite supply of ki, which can be used to unleash secret techniques from their monastic tradition, the Way of the Worldbreaker.
35	There is no known strategy that has proven effective against a worldbreaker, but there are legends of their most deadly technique: the infinity punch. This attack requires all of the giant's efforts to perform but allows the worldbreaker to literally strike through an entire world in a single blow. Surviving such a hit is almost impossible.

TACTICS

Arguably the most dangerous creature in the *Total Party Kill Bestiary*, the primordial worldbreaker possesses overwhelming power. It has a plethora of monk-like abilities, along with a ki pool which you will need to track over the course of an encounter. Unless the worldbreaker knows that this combat is the most significant one it is likely to face anytime soon, it will refrain from using its Infinity Punch steps until it is certain its foes are worthy. In the meantime, it will deliver punishing attacks that can take even the most robust barbarian down in a single round. Note the worldbreaker's obscene speed on its legs, along with damage on attacks that surpasses anything else found in this book. Many of the worldbreaker's attacks can hit every everything within a certain area of its primary target. This includes objects and structures, allowing a worldbreaker to literally punch through solid barriers and strike targets behind cover. Additionally, a critical hit from one of the worldbreaker's most powerful attacks is usually enough to one-shot a character, so be careful when attacking with advantage. Remember that any creature at 0 hit points or reduced to 0 hit points by a worldbreaker's attacks is disintegrated, meaning spells like *revivify* are worthless once a character has been killed.

Easier Tactics – Never use the worldbreaker's Infinity Punch, and only attack high-health targets. Unless the worldbreaker has a substantial reason for killing every member of the party, have the giant disengage from combat as soon as it knows it has won. Treat combat like a training regime for the worldbreaker, where it's more interested in testing its abilities than pummeling the characters into oblivion.

Harder Tactics – First, strike all sympathy from your mind. Like the worldbreaker, you must understand the value of absolute destruction, and your players will now experience an encounter that is ridiculously unfair. As soon as the characters get within sight of the worldbreaker, start up its Infinity Punch steps. Even if the characters manage to avoid the worst of it, the very act of that attack going off is a cataclysm of epic proportions, the ramifications of which are a story all to itself. Next, focus fire all of the worldbreaker's attacks on a single target until it is disintegrated. The giant's speed should keep it away from pesky paladins and beefy barbarians while it obliterates squishy spellcasters. This encounter will be hilariously unfair, with the worldbreaker possessing a counter to almost every tactic the characters can throw at it. The giant's engagement range is almost always going to be greater than the players', so push that advantage as hard as possible. Always keep ki points on hand to succeed on saving throws, and never let a single success against the worldbreaker go unpunished.

The Primordial Worldbreaker

Slate invited me on a holy pilgrimage, promising an encounter the likes of which I have never experienced. I was skeptical, but I have learned to trust the monk's insightful judgement. I was not disappointed, for we journeyed to the home of a primordial worldbreaker. We sat in the giant's presence for a solid month, like children resting beneath a great tree. Even my life as a gnome could not have prepared me for how small I felt in those days. Knowing what the worldbreaker was capable of, I was humbled by its tolerance of our existence. What trivial importance we place upon our own affairs, not realizing each day is afforded to us by the grace of such beings who choose to contain their near-infinite power. While I have always acquired knowledge on my journeys, it is only in the presence of a worldbreaker that I discovered true wisdom.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Elite

Favors: Barbarians, Damage (Single-Target), Hit Points (High), Paladins, Warlocks

Foils: Clerics, Healing, Range, Rangers, Rogues

PLOT HOOKS

Fists of the Worldbreakers. A worldbreaker has decided that unless a student worthy of learning its monastic traditions can be found, it will destroy an entire continent. Whether this is a deception meant to inspire a generation or a legitimate threat is irrelevant. The world cannot afford to call the worldbreaker's bluff.

Triumvirate. A worldbreaker, thunderking, and ashcaller have joined forces in uniting the giants of all races. The primordial destroyers have decided that instead of unmaking the world, they will instead make the best with what they have by ensuring giant supremacy.

Cult of the Worldbreaker. A monastic tradition has built a temple around the form of a meditating worldbreaker. Inspired by the giant's power, the monks emulate its destructive power and view that the world is tragically and irredeemably flawed. The worldbreaker's presence ensures the cult remains unopposed, and its members grow bolder and more dangerous by the day.

TREASURE

The Way of the Worldbreaker demands detachment from the material, so the worldbreakers keep no worldly possessions. They view such objects as corruption given shape, inferior to purity of spirit. This belief is reinforced by the strength of a worldbreaker's own spirit, which is so powerful that it persists through death. When a creature strikes the killing blow (figuratively speaking) against a worldbreaker, the giant's spirit honors the creature with a special boon. The creature becomes immediately incapacitated and experiences visions of the past over the course of the next hour. During this time, the creature witnesses the primordial destroyer's first attempts to forge worlds, an era that predates all recorded history. At the end of the experience, the creature gains a mystical boon which confers the following benefits.

Boon of Creation

You can cast the spell *true polymorph* (spell save DC 20) but cannot target yourself with the spell. Once you have used this feature, you must finish a short rest before you can use it again.

ECOLOGY

Worldbreakers spend most of their lives in quiet contemplation. While they yearn to make the worlds anew, deep moral repercussions of doing so have locked the race in a complex ethical dilemma. While far from saintly, worldbreakers are not cruel and have no wish for innocents to suffer needlessly. It takes an act of great significance to rouse a worldbreaker

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER

Titanic giant, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)
Hit Points special
Speed speciall

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	30 (+10)	30 (+10)	19 (+4)	30 (+10)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +17, Con +19, Int +13, Wis +19
Skills Insight +19, Perception +19, Religion +22
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities paralyzed, restrained, unconscious
Senses truesight 240 ft., passive Perception 29
Languages Common, Giant
Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

TRAITS

Bringer of Destruction. The worldbreaker's attacks are magical. When the worldbreaker scores a hit, it deals an extra 36 (8d8) force damage (included in the attack). If a target is reduced to 0 hit points or is at 0 hit points when it takes this damage, it is disintegrated. When a nonmagical object or magical item of uncommon quality or lower touches the worldbreaker, the worldbreaker can choose to disintegrate the touched object or magical item (no action required).

Destructive Ki. The worldbreaker's body overflows with destructive ki, possessing 30 ki points. The worldbreaker can expend ki points (included in the feature's description) to take certain actions. The worldbreaker recovers all of its ki points when it finishes a short or long rest.

Diamond Soul. When the worldbreaker fails a saving throw, it can expend 4 ki points to succeed instead.

Titanic Creature. The worldbreaker is a titanic creature which is so large that combat involves dividing its body up into various sections, each of which has a fixed initiative count on which it acts (losing initiative ties), detailed in its description. Each section is considered a unique creature for purposes of targeting (in case an effect or attack would include multiple targets), and effects that include an area may affect multiple sections of the worldbreaker if the area is large enough. Each section has its own hit points and actions but shares the worldbreaker's other statistics (such as damage resistances, saving throws, etc.). When a section is reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes incapacitated until it regains hit points or the worldbreaker is slain, which causes the section to die along with the worldbreaker. If a section has a speed, the worldbreaker can move up to that section's speed during the section's turn. Creatures can enter and occupy the same space as the worldbreaker, which is considered difficult terrain, and the worldbreaker cannot make opportunity attacks. Finally, attempts to forcibly move, banish, or magically teleport the worldbreaker or any of its parts automatically fail.

from its meditation. Such events can shatter a worldbreaker's indecisiveness, while the world watches with bated breath to see what conclusion the giant has come to. Due to their power, size, and relative passivity, worldbreakers are easy to find despite their low numbers. Only the extremely foolhardy or dangerously psychotic would provoke such a creature. In conversation primordial worldbreakers are soft spoken, their deep voices shaking the earth with every syllable. Only the wisest of creatures are capable of holding a conversation with a worldbreaker. The giants are notorious for speaking abstractly, with such a broad perspective it's nearly impossible to comprehend their worldview. Occasionally, worldbreakers will answer the questions of "temporal" creatures, particularly if they show great wisdom or purity of spirit.

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER – HEAD AND BODY

Hit Points 492 (24d20 + 240)
Initiative Count 20

TRAITS

Bastion of the Mind. Effects that would attempt to influence the worldbreaker's mind (such as psychic damage, the stunned and unconscious conditions, or effects that force an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw) can only affect this section (all other sections are immune). If this section is blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned, or unconscious, all the other sections are as well.

Heart of Stone. When this section is reduced to 0 hit points, the worldbreaker is slain. If any of the worldbreaker's other sections have at least 1 hit point, this section has resistance to damage.

Position. The head and body of the worldbreaker is at least 120 feet above the space it occupies. The section is a cube approximately 30 feet wide, 80 feet tall, and 30 feet deep.

ACTIONS

Empowering Spirit. The worldbreaker regains 5 ki points.

Infinity Punch (Step 1). The worldbreaker performs the first step in a deadly martial arts technique known as the infinity punch, gathering its strength and focusing its energy.

Multistrike (Costs 2 Ki Points). Until the start of this section's next turn, the next time the worldbreaker would take an action to make an attack, it may make two additional attacks.

Sense Spirit (Costs 3 Ki Points). The worldbreaker precisely locates the exact position of a creature it is aware of within 500 feet of it. Until the start of this section's next turn, the worldbreaker has advantage on attack rolls against that creature, and the creature cannot be hidden from the worldbreaker.

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER – LEFT ARM

Hit Points 328 (16d20 + 160)
Initiative Count 15

TRAITS

Position. The left arm of the worldbreaker is positioned on the left side of its body and head and is typically 160 feet up immediately to the left of the space the worldbreaker occupies. The arm occupies a cube approximately 90 feet tall, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet deep.

ACTIONS

Deflection (Costs 3 Ki Points). Until the start of this section's next turn, when another section of the worldbreaker would be targeted by a spell or ranged attack, it may make this section the target of the attack instead.

Infinity Punch (Step 2). The worldbreaker performs the second step in a deadly martial arts technique known as the infinity punch, positioning its upper body to deliver the blow. The worldbreaker cannot take this action unless it previously took the Infinity Punch (Step 1) action this round.

Martial Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 90 ft., every creature and object within 10 ft. of the target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage and 36 (8d8) force damage.

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER – RIGHT ARM

Hit Points 328 (16d20 + 160)
Initiative Count 5

TRAITS

Position. The right arm of the worldbreaker is positioned on the right side of its body and head and is typically 160 feet up immediately to the left of the space the worldbreaker occupies. The arm occupies a cube approximately 90 feet tall, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet deep.

ACTIONS

Infinity Punch (Step 4). The worldbreaker performs the final step in a deadly martial arts technique known as the infinity punch. The worldbreaker cannot take this action unless it previously took the Infinity Punch (Step 3) action this round.

The worldbreaker delivers a devastating blow that defies all reason, projecting a line of force 50 feet wide of infinite length. Creatures, objects, and structures in that area take 256 (20d20 + 10 plus 8d8) force damage. Affected targets cannot have resistance or immunity to this damage, and magical barriers that would obstruct the attack's path are instead destroyed. Once the worldbreaker has used this action, it cannot use it again until a century has passed.

Ki Blast (Costs 5 Ki Points). The worldbreaker projects a line of destructive ki in a 1-mile-long, 30-foot-wide line. Anything in that area must succeed on a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw or take 70 (20d6) force damage, or half as much on a success.

Martial Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 90 ft., every creature and object within 10 ft. of the target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage and 36 (8d8) force damage.

PRIMORDIAL WORLDBREAKER – LEGS

Hit Points 369 (18d20 + 180)
Initiative Count 10
Speed 240 ft.

TRAITS

Position. The legs of the worldbreaker are positioned at the base of its space, which is typically a 50-foot-by-50-foot square. The worldbreaker's legs are approximately 120 feet tall.

Powerful Strides. The worldbreaker is immune to difficult terrain.

Unarmored Movement. The worldbreaker can move along vertical surface and across liquids without falling during the move.

ACTIONS

Crescent Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 120 ft., every creature and object within 10 ft. of the target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage and 36 (8d8) force damage. If the target is a Gargantuan or smaller creature, it is pushed up to 120 feet in a straight line in a direction of the worldbreaker's choice.

Infinity Punch (Step 3). The worldbreaker's speed becomes 0 until the start of this section's next turn, and it performs the third step in a deadly martial arts technique known as the infinity punch, moving into a combat stance necessary to make the attack. The worldbreaker cannot take this action if it expended movement this turn. Additionally, the worldbreaker cannot take this action unless it previously took the Infinity Punch (Step 2) action this round.

Sonic Boom Kick (Costs 4 Ki Points). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 120 ft., every creature and object within 10 ft. of the target. *Hit:* 75 (10d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage and 36 (8d8) force damage. A creature hit by this attack must succeed on a DC 27 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of this section's next turn.

Rakshasa Arya

As residents of hell, rakshasa have an affinity for law and order. Unlike devils, whose ambition and lust for power create a brutal ladder to greatness, rakshasa are locked in an eternal hierarchy. Each rakshasa has a specific role and status within its society, and each knows exactly where it ranks relative to its kin. The higher up the hierarchy one climbs, the more powerful and specialized a rakshasa becomes. The noblest among them are known as the arya, supremely powerful fiends with terrifying abilities. The andhere, yoddha, and haddiyon are but three examples of this elite class, with even more rumored to exist in the upper echelons of rakshasa society.

RAKSHASA ANDHERE

Striking with the fury of a tiger and the grace of a serpent, the patient andhere is a masterful predator of mortals. Keeping with the tiger-headed motif shared by all rakshasa, the hair of an andhere is an inky black with its stripes barely highlighted. These fiends are the most subtle and deceptive of their kind, acting as personal assassins and spies within the rakshasa courts. When called to the mortal realms, andhere are almost impossible to detect. Few beings can escape the blades of an andhere, magical weaponry infused with the evil of the hells; the andhere evade capture and powerful magic alike with extraordinary ease.

The Rakshasa Andhere

My first experience with the rakshasa known as an andhere was a painful knife in the back. I woke up two days later, the pain still fresh in my mind. Not known for my carelessness, I asked Ava if she had seen or captured the assassin. To my astonishment, she had not. If a rogue as daring and devious as she can be completely outfoxed by this creature, then these fiends are more dangerous than I dared imagine. If you know an andhere to be hunting you, you are never safe. There is no defense, no protection, no hidden refuge that can guarantee you will survive.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Barbarians, Bards, Blindsight, Clerics, Rogues, Hit Points (High), Truesight

Foils: Disarming, Fighters, Monks, Spells (Damaging), Warlocks, Wizards

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a rakshasa andhere with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

RAKSHASA ANDHERE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	The andhere is a master assassin of the rakshasa family. They are swift, powerful, and stealthy, eclipsing the skills of all but the finest of mortal assassins. Their blades are magical, and they have a magical affinity for darkness.
21	While they are a higher class of fiend, andhere are still rakshasa. They have powerful defenses against magic, are expert tricksters, and can manipulate light with their magic. Their speed is exceptional for their size, and they have been known to hide in the shadows themselves.
26	Silver piercing weapons wielded by good creatures are anathema to rakshasa, and andhere are no exception. Their stealthy abilities are almost magical, requiring enhanced senses to detect. While the creature's body is swift, it is not durable. Wait until it reveals itself, then strike with overwhelming force.

TACTICS

Andhere caught in the open are easy foes, and they will never fight in such a manner unless caught completely by surprise. Reliant on their Sneak Attack feature for damage, everything an andhere does is focused around enabling it. They will use their Cunning Action to hide or stand in the shadows to become invisible, allowing for advantage on attacks and, ergo, Sneak Attack. Like all good assassins, an andhere strikes first and hard. The creatures are adept at disguising themselves, and with enough heavy cloaks can blend in among humanoids. Unless players are expecting an imminent attack by a fiendish assassin, chances are they will be surprised when a tiger-headed creature wielding swords lunges from the shadows.

Use Shadow Step and Cunning Action to keep the andhere invisible and/or hidden. When outmatched or no longer able to attack effectively, an andhere can easily retreat and wait for a better opportunity. Combined with Shadow Step, Cunning Action, and the Dash action, an andhere can retreat well over 200 feet in a single turn, likely becoming invisible in the process.

Easier Tactics – Once the andhere makes its initial attack, it should maneuver into the shadows but not take the Hide action. This keeps the location of the andhere known at all times while still allowing it to utilize Sneak Attack. Fight to the death, as an inexperienced party will likely be completely unable to track an andhere down.



TALIEN'S NOTES

If their hunger for humanoid flesh wasn't so high on their priorities, I would consider rakshasa to be a most respectable breed of fiend. I had hoped the elite among them, the arya, would prove to be more personable. After several initial encounters with them, I found my supposition to be mostly correct. However, I now know such an impression was intended. The eloquent fiends understood me and my mission perfectly, and they were shockingly easy to find. They wove tales of their culture, power, and purpose in the hells. Each story carefully crafted to portray them as misunderstood creatures from another world, whose presence and influence should be regarded with curiosity, not suspicion. I am ashamed to admit I almost fell for this ruse. Had I been deceived, this tome would now serve the interests of these loathsome fiends, and I would be a traitor to my own cause.

Harder Tactics – The andhere is an experienced assassin able to take down powerful threats and should attack with surprise when the characters are most vulnerable. It then utilizes a hit-and-run strategy, attacking, using Shadow Step to teleport out of range, then taking the Hide action using Cunning Action. Unless they have truesight, the characters will only catch brief glimpses of the fiend in between stabbing sessions.

PLOT HOOKS

High Price. A desperate king has hired a new court assassin to deal with powerful rivals, which has been solving "problems" at an alarming speed. With each new success, a member of the king's court goes missing, a mystery the king has been unwilling to investigate.

Friendly Wager. A pair of andhere have made a wager. The first to assassinate a particular character wins. With time of the essence, the fiends are unable to take their patient and more subtle approach. Each andhere sends the characters cryptic letters warning of an impending assassin, in hopes of foiling its competitor.

Laying Low. An archdevil has been killed by quartet of andhere, and three of the assassins were captured and executed. The last escaped to the material plane, sought by the forces of evil for revenge, and sought by the forces of good for information in exchange for protective custody.

TREASURE

Like most fiends, an andhere defeated outside of its home plane vanishes along with its equipment. If one of these rakshasa is slain while in the hells, it is permanently destroyed, and its equipment can be claimed by the victors. Each andhere wields a pair of talwar, curved blades that are as dangerous as a longsword but as light as a rapier. In the hands of non-rakshasa, talwar are not inherently magical, but they are formidable weapons nonetheless.

New Weapon: Talwar

NAME	COST	DAMAGE
Talwar (martial melee weapon)	1,000 gp	1d8 slashing

WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
1 lb.	Finesse, light, thrown (range 20/40)

ECOLOGY

When rakshasa need someone killed (a frequent need among powerful fiends), they turn to the andhere. Spies, assassins, and thieves, andhere are mistrusted by all who know their true nature, and for good reason. The motivations of each andhere are diverse and mercurial. Some kill for sport, others for treasure, and some for a cause greater than themselves.

RAKSHASA ANDHERE

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 127 (17d8 + 51)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	23 (+6)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +8, Cha +10
Skills Acrobatics +16, Deception +15, Insight +8, Perception +8, Stealth +16
Damage Vulnerabilities piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, Infernal
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the rakshasa can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Shadow in the Night. The rakshasa is invisible when in dim light or darkness.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The rakshasa deals an extra 35 (10d6) damage when it 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 the rakshasa that isn't incapacitated and the rakshasa doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Tools of Assassination. The rakshasa's weapons are magical and composed of fiendish green steel. The rakshasa has a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls (included in the attack) made with its talwar. If the rakshasa starts its turn and is not in possession of its talwar, the weapons magically reappear in its possession.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The rakshasa makes two attacks and takes one other action.

Shadow Step. The rakshasa magically teleports up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space it can see that is in dim light or darkness.

Snuff Light. The rakshasa blows a puff of air at a source of light from an object (such as a torch or lantern) or a magical effect (such as *light*) it can see. The light is snuffed out immediately, and spells or magical effects producing light affected by this feature immediately end.

Talwar. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d8 + 8) slashing damage. If the attack scores a critical hit, double the damage of the attack.

REACTIONS

Deceptive Magic Immunity. When the rakshasa is affected by a spell or magical effect, it can use its reaction to attempt a Charisma (Deception) ability check versus the source's spell save DC. On a success, the rakshasa is unaffected and a creature of the rakshasa's choice that it can see is affected instead.

When not stalking a target, andhere are pleasant and quiet. They prefer not to be recognized or known for their achievements, and they avoid being crude or cruel to those they do not intend to kill. The less of an impression andhere make on other beings, the more likely they are to be forgotten—a useful status in their line of work. When working outside of the hells, andhere avoid contact with humanoids unless absolutely necessary. They are quick to acquire disguises both mundane and magical, only revealing themselves when cornered or on the cusp of victory.

RAKSHASA YODDHA

Where other rakshasa use deceit and subterfuge to achieve their goals, the yoddha uses steel. A towering, tiger-headed fiend with majestic white fur, each of a yoddha's four arms holds a blade forged in the fires of the hells. Bombastic and flamboyant, these fiends are ferocious warriors that can slice-and-dice anything that gets in their way. The greatest of mortal heroes can only envy the yoddha's flawless technique, weaving its four blades together in a deadly, effortless dance.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a rakshasa yoddha with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

RAKSHASA YODDHA LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Beware the whirling blades of the rakshasa yoddha. They cut deeply and are four in number. These fiends are as fast as they are strong and are honorable warriors on the battlefield.
22	Rakshasa yoddha can parry magic as easily as a warrior would parry a blade. Their greatswords are imbued with pure evil, causing greater harm to those who do not walk the path of villainy. A yoddha's reflexes are four times that of a mortal, allowing them to react to almost any situation.
27	While a yoddha is big and strong, it is not fast. The best defense against their overwhelming attacks is to just stay out of range. Magical barriers provide little defense, as the rakshasa can cleave through all but the most powerful spells.

TACTICS

A yoddha fights with honor, declaring its intentions in battle and never slaughtering a defenseless opponent. Once all enemies lie bleeding at its feet, a yoddha then gives each an honorable death, stabbing them through the heart. These rakshasa unleash overwhelming martial assaults against a single target, dicing it to ribbons before moving on to the next one. A yoddha quickly realizes if those it fights are not evil and focuses on targets with lower hit points to compensate for its reduced damage. When confronted with magic that attempts to separate the yoddha from its victims, it takes its Whirlwind Attack action and zooms about the battlefield. In this state the yoddha attempts to hit as many creatures as possible, ending its rampage near the most injured survivor.

A yoddha has four reactions per round and must make good use of them to be a deadly threat. Save Uncanny Dodge for big hits from rogues, paladins, and barbarians, and use Warrior's Magic Immunity to counter powerful spells that would incapacitate or disable the yoddha.

Easier Tactics – Only use Whirlwind Attack in the direst of situations, and don't be selective about the yoddha's use of reactions. Blow through them as quickly as possible, allowing the party to capitalize on its more vulnerable state once its run out.

Harder Tactics – Make sure the rakshasa starts within 40 ft. of the party when you roll initiative. Immediately open with Whirlwind Attack and move within range of as many PCs as possible. Taking the attacks of opportunity is worth it, and position the rakshasa to provide maximum opportunity attack coverage in case anyone tries to get away. If you allow meta gaming at your table, return the favor by holding reactions for Warrior's Magic Immunity, waiting for spellcasting PCs to unleash their most powerful magic.

PLOT HOOKS

A Connoisseur of Blades. A rakshasa yoddha has appeared within a populous city and requested a local smith fashion one of her legendary blades for the fiend's personal collection. While it has yet to harm anyone, the creature's presence is extremely unsettling and causing irreparable harm to a nearby tavern's reputation where it spends its days waiting for the blade to be forged.

Honor Bound. The most honorable warrior character in the party is visited by an imp heralding a challenge from a rakshasa yoddha that has

The Rakshasa Yoddha

When Zau-Hek faced down the rakshasa yoddha, I was surprised to see her respectful bow reciprocated. The subsequent battle was the only time I have witnessed her skill as a fighter so outclassed. The fiend was a whirlwind of steel, fur, and fury, which left scars we all carry to this day. Never underestimate the wonders of martial skill, even when contested by magic. A sword is just as powerful as any spell in the right hands.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Brute

Favors: Evil Creatures, Fighters, Range, Rangers, Warlocks

Foils: Attacks (Few), Paladins, Rogues, Sorcerers, Spells (Single-Target)

heard of the warrior's skills. The character (and the character's friends) are invited to the hells and will receive safe passage, provided they agree to an honorable duel with the fiend. The rakshasa promises it will be nonlethal, so there is probably nothing to worry about.

Vorpal Quartet. A rakshasa yoddha has acquired three *vorpal greatswords* and is desperately searching for a fourth. The fiend believes that by wielding these four blades, it will become the deadliest warrior in existence. While the claim is dubious, the fiend will no doubt be a menace of impressive power that must be stopped should it achieve its goal.

Tainted Edge

Weapon (greatsword), very rare (requires attunement by a creature that has defeated a rakshasa yoddha in honorable combat)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. Additionally, the weapon deals an extra 2d8 necrotic damage to any non-evil creature it hits.

Curse. The weapon is cursed. If you are reduced to 0 hit points by an enemy creature or defeated in honorable combat, the weapon immediately vanishes, reappearing in possession of the rakshasa yoddha to whom it belongs (or its closest living relative).

TREASURE

When a rakshasa yoddha is defeated in honorable combat, it bursts into flames, leaving behind a trophy for the victor(s) to keep. This gift is always one of the yoddha's blades, a greatsword fashioned of green steel that is tainted with the very essence of evil.

ECOLOGY

Warrior hierarchs of rakshasa society, yoddha never pass up a chance to show off their strength. The sight of another being with huge muscles and an even huger personality is a test waiting to be overcome, which a yoddha always tackles head on. Despite their larger-than-life personalities, yoddha are surprisingly fun to be around once one has earned their respect. Those who do not share their values of honor and strength are mercilessly bullied, with non-fiends at particular risk of being killed for sport. A yoddha's favorite food is humanoid hearts, which it consumes by the plateful in between workout sessions. Other rakshasa find yoddha too intense to enjoy their company, but you'll never hear one say that out loud.

RAKSHASA YODDHA

Huge fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 241 (21d12 + 105)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	17 (+3)	21 (+5)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +10, Cha +10
Skills Athletics +12, History +7, Intimidation +15, Perception +7
Damage Vulnerabilities piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Infernal
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

TRAITS

Lightning Reflexes. The rakshasa has three extra reactions.

Tools of Slaughter. The rakshasa's weapons are magical and composed of fiendish green steel. The rakshasa has a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls (included in the attack) made with its greatswords. The blades vanish if held by a creature other than the rakshasa and reappear in the rakshasa's possession at the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The rakshasa makes four attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6 + 10) slashing damage. If the target is a non-evil creature, it takes an additional 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Whirlwind Attack (Recharge 5–6). The rakshasa begins spinning at high speed until the end of its turn, gaining the following benefits.

- The rakshasa's speed is doubled.
- When the rakshasa comes within 10 feet of a creature for the first time on a turn, it makes two greatsword attacks against that creature.
- When the rakshasa comes within 10 feet of an object or structure for the first time on a turn, it deals 50 points of slashing damage to it.
- When the rakshasa comes within 10 feet of a spell or magical effect of 7th level or lower that would obstruct or prevent its movement, the effect immediately ends.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker that the rakshasa can see hits it with an attack, it can use its reaction to halve the attack's damage against it.

Warrior's Magic Immunity. When the rakshasa is targeted by a spell or magical effect, it can use its reaction to attempt to parry it. To do so, the rakshasa makes a Greatsword attack. If the attack roll is greater than or equal to the source of the targeting spell or magical effect's save DC, the spell or magical effect is parried and instead targets the source of the spell or magical effect.

RAKSHASA HADDIYON

The feared aristocrats of the rakshasa, haddiyon have delved deeply into the evil origins of their kind. While the power they unearthed was formidable, the haddiyon paid a terrible price. The entire caste now overflows with a terrible corruption which they spread to all corners of the multiverse with the aid of profane magic. The face of a haddiyon is stripped of flesh, leaving only a skull whose eyes burn with purple flames. Their once magnificent fur is mangy and unkept, for the vile evil that suffuses a haddiyon cannot be contained without cost. Not quite undead, but not worthy of being called alive, these rakshasa are among the most fearsome fiends mortals can ever face.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a rakshasa haddiyon with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

RAKSHASA HADDIYON LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	Rakshasa haddiyon are powerful spellcasters whose magic is a twisted reflection of druidic spellcasting. They can corrupt the land at a frightening pace, crippling those who stand upon it.
23	A haddiyon can absorb the spells of its enemies for its own use. It can even consume its own magic to recover from grievous injuries. A haddiyon's most formidable spells can generate horrific natural disasters or cripple the minds of its enemies.
28	The longer a haddiyon has to prepare for battle, the more dangerous it will be. Stay off the ground to avoid the worst of its corruption, and don't try to hit it with spells that aren't of the highest level. Such effects only serve to strengthen the haddiyon.

TACTICS

As with many spellcasting creatures, the danger posed by a haddiyon depends on which spells it casts. If given time to prepare for battle, the haddiyon casts *foresight* for its universal benefits. When facing melee opponents, the rakshasa casts *antilife shell* early. Otherwise it uses its concentration to focus on powerful damaging magic like *bones of the earth* or *whirlwind*. Additionally, consider *freedom of movement* in advance of combat, thanks to its long duration and lack of required concentration. Note that most of the haddiyon's spells affect an area, which synergizes with its Blightcaller feature. This effect also applies to the haddiyon's Earth Reaver ability, which it can use to corrupt a massive area quickly.

Don't be stingy with the haddiyon's spell slots in combat, particularly when facing spellcasting foes. With a least one spellcaster in the party, the fiend can leverage its natural magic absorption to regain spell slots. Once the creature is concentrating on a spell, cast *blight* and *frostbite* spells every round for huge damage, increasing the spell level of *blight* when appropriate.

The Rakshasa Haddiyon

Some incarnations of evil are so intolerable I can think of no productive reason for their continued existence. Such is the case with the rakshasa caste known as the haddiyon. These creatures have no respect for anything but their own ambition. I suspect even other rakshasa would rather be rid of them, though if such a thing were possible it would already have been done. Their corruption can taint even the purest realms, reducing all it touches to a pathetic shell of its former glory. I will never forget the sensation...as if every fiber of my being was being violated by evil. At the risk of sounding too opinionated for professional publications, it is in this scholar's opinion that these creatures be opposed at all costs and destroyed without mercy.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Artillery

Favors: Evil Creatures, Fighters, Monks, Spells (Defensive), Wizards

Foils: Clerics, Druids, Mobility (Low), Saving Throws (Low), Warlocks

Easier Tactics – Avoid using Earth Reaver, and avoid starting combat with spells cast on the haddiyon. Use the rakshasa's highest-level spell slots with Subsume Magic instead of casting its most powerful spells.

Harder Tactics – Start combat with a significant amount of the battlefield under the effects of Blightcaller. When the characters have established a "safe" area away from blighted space, use Earth Reaver to shut that strategy down. Cast *feeblemind* on the first non-wizard spellcaster that gets within range, and cast *hold person* at higher levels to paralyze as many targets as possible. Apply Subsume Magic at every opportunity to make use of the low-level spell slots the haddiyon is unlikely to need.

PLOT HOOKS

The Woods Have Eyes. A forest once known for its bountiful wildlife and extravagant beauty has become inhospitable and dangerous. Those who have attempted to investigate the source of this change have never returned. Strange sounds, chanting that resembles a summoning ritual, can be heard coming from the forest at night.

The Ambassador. A diplomat from the hells arrives in the capital with intentions of establishing a magical treaty that will limit the summoning of

fiends within the empire. The ambassador is a rakshasa haddiyon whose corrosive presence makes negotiations horrifically difficult, giving the fiends the advantage.

Head of the Family. A noble line of rakshasa seeks to assassinate its patriarch, a haddiyon that is cruel even by the rakshasa's standards. To avoid suspicion, the family seeks out noble heroes from the material plane with a talent for killing fiends. The financial compensation for such a deed is considerable, for the family is one of the most powerful rakshasa lines.

TREASURE

A rakshasa haddiyon has many uses for treasure, especially items that enhance its spellcasting. They typically have at least one such item of rare quality or lower in their possession at all times. Additionally, when slain on its home plane, the body of a haddiyon is consumed in purple fire, leaving only its skull. This skull is a powerful magical item that can be used by its wielder to consume magic.

Ravenous Skull

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This tiger skull is charred black from hellfire. While you hold the skull, as a bonus action on each of your turns you can expend a single spell slot and convert its magic into healing energy. You regain 1d8 hit points, plus an additional 1d8 per level of the spell slot expended. If you would regain hit points past your hit point maximum, you gain excess as temporary hit points that last until you finish a short rest.

ECOLOGY

While a haddiyon's powers are muted against evil beings, their personalities are just as contemptable. These creatures live reclusive lives in tall towers or hidden refuges, interacting with other creatures only when a matter of utmost importance arises. Haddiyon are fascinated by evil and spend the majority of their existence seeking to understand its many facets. This knowledge contributes to their menace, as these rakshasa can be expected to know details about some of the most vile and contemptable magic, artifacts, and acts that would turn a devil's stomach. Haddiyon are eager to experiment on other beings to test their theories. Each will collect a wide spectrum of creatures to ensure quality samples, though few beings serve a haddiyon willingly. Other rakshasa prefer to avoid the haddiyon caste, calling upon their expertise only as a last resort.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region around a rakshasa haddiyon becomes corrupted by its presence. Whenever the rakshasa finishes a long rest it creates one or more of the following effects within 10 miles of its location.

- The alignment of beasts and plant creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or lower within the area becomes lawful evil. Affected creatures are friendly toward the rakshasa.
- All food and drink in the area becomes poisonous to non-evil creatures.

RAKSHASA HADDIYON

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 178 (21d8 + 84)
Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	27 (+8)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +11, Con +9, Wis +13
Skills Insight +13, Nature +14, Perception +13, Persuasion +12
Damage Vulnerabilities piercing from magic weapons wielded by good creatures
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages Common, Infernal
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Blightcaller. When the rakshasa affects an area with a spell or magical effect, the ground in that area becomes corrupted. When a non-evil creature on the blighted ground attempts an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check, it rolls a d8 and subtracts the number rolled from the result. Any corruption caused by this effect fades 1 month after the rakshasa leaves the locale.

Natural Spell Immunity. The rakshasa is immune to spells of 8th level or lower unless it wishes to be affected. If it chooses to be affected by a spell cast by an enemy creature, it gains a spell slot of that spell's level or lower, up to its spell slot maximum.

Spellcasting. The rakshasa is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). The rakshasa has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft*, *frostbite*†, *infestation*†, *produce flame*
1st level (4 slots): *create or destroy water*, *detect magic*, *earth tremor*†, *entangle*
2nd level (3 slots): *dust devil*†, *hold person*, *moonbeam*
3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *erupting earth*†, *wind wall*
4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *freedom of movement*, *polymorph*
5th level (3 slots): *antilife shell*, *contagion*, *wrath of nature*†
6th level (2 slots): *bones of the earth*†, *transport via plants*
7th level (2 slots): *reverse gravity*, *whirlwind*†
8th level (1 slot): *feeblemind*
9th level (1 slot): *foresight*

Subsume Magic. At the start of each of its turns, the rakshasa can choose to expend a single spell slot of 1st level or higher. When it does so, the rakshasa regains 1d8 hit points plus an additional 1d8 per level of the spell slot expended.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The rakshasa casts up to three spells: a spell of 1st level or higher and two cantrips.

Earth Reaver (Recharge 6). The rakshasa strikes the ground with its fist, causing a tremendous magical explosion in a 300-foot radius centered on it. Creatures standing on the ground in the area must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 78 (12d12) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a success. Objects and structures in the area take double damage from this effect.

†This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*.

Seven Holy Virtues

Celestial forces can embody abstract values; these beings shape sentient life in positive ways, furthering the cause of good throughout the realms. The greatest of these values are the seven virtues, principles that guide one's life irrevocably toward goodness. These holy aspects can assume physical form in the shape of bizarre celestials of polarizing morality. Each is extraordinarily powerful, tasked with bringing its unique aspect of goodness to the realms. Taken to extremes, these virtues can become restrictive, stifling, and even harmful. They manifest in areas that have strayed too far into vice and sin, and they seek to correct the problem through sweeping change. But the pendulum swings hard the other way, and to the mortals they "help," the presence of a holy virtue can sometimes be worse than whatever evil came before.

SUBLIME CHASTITY

The least directly impactful of the holy virtues, sublime chastity debilitates its enemies and leaves them weak and ashamed. It also leaves them vulnerable to attack by other, more dangerous allies and is seldom found unsupported by other forces of good. Appearing as a gothic cathedral that walks like a man, these celestials are elegant testaments to the virtues of purity. The architecture of each chastity is unique, though all are mantled by three pairs of wings that allow it to move with a heavenly grace. A sublime chastity roots out corruption and decadence, forcefully correcting the course of moral impurity and cultural blight.

The Sublime Chastity

Sublime chastity is seldom considered a virtue in this day and age, but these celestials are nothing if not extreme. Personally, I would doubt anyone would extoll the benefits of complete and utter repression of our mortal nature—particularly when that someone is an amorphous, ambulating energy field of divine magic—but that is merely my opinion. The sense of profound shame one feels in their presence is enough to turn a paladin's face bright crimson and make a rakish man into a priest. These may seem like positive changes, but the manner in which these changes are enforced is nothing less than violent.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Leader

Favors: Bards, Charisma (High), Dexterity (Targeting), Sorcerers, Warlocks

Foils: Attack Bonus (Low), Druids, Fighters, Monks, Paladins, Radiant (Damage)

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a sublime chastity with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

SUBLIME CHASTITY LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	One of the seven holy virtues, sublime chastity is a celestial being that manifests when mortals demonstrate an excess of lust and other hedonistic pursuits. It carries an aura of profound goodness that causes even the most wholesome humanoids to pause and reflect, feeling shame for every misdeed, no matter how minor.
20	Damaging a sublime chastity is not easy; it is well armored by a field of protective energy and can forgo taking offensive action to further bolster its already impressive defenses. It is also capable of flying at incredible speed. Its command of magic allows it to devastate its enemies and control their minds, disabling foes without ever spilling a drop of their blood.
24	Though it moves quickly, the sublime chastity has inferior reflexes and is vulnerable to powerful spells that target large areas or otherwise require a target to dodge out of the way. In addition, the sublime chastity targets the force of personality of its victims, and those who are bolstered by the words of bards or magic like *enhance ability* are much more resilient.

TACTICS

A sublime chastity relies on allies to be a true threat. It can lock down characters and be hard to kill, but it lacks the damage output to actually take out the party on its own. Be sure to remember the Aura of Purity feature every turn—it's a core part of combat against the sublime chastity. On the chastity's turns, focus on its spells. *Mass suggestion* is immensely powerful, but its true potency will depend on what the suggestions are. Focus on those that are shame themed for some good roleplaying moments, such as "Cease fighting and recount your most shameful memory." *Hold person* is a powerful spell, but because it is cast via Innate Spellcasting, it cannot be cast at higher levels and therefore can only target one creature.

The chastity's action is much better spent casting *heal* on an ally or using *divine word* on a heavily wounded party to make a bad situation worse. Only use Faithful Strike if there are no good spellcasting options. Dedication can be used for a powerful roleplaying moment, with the chastity spending a turn preparing before casting *geas* on one of the party members. A chastity never kills if it can help it, preferring to purify those it defeats through judicious amounts of holy magic and a rigorous education in morality.



Easier Tactics – Use Faithful Strike on every other turn for some basic damage. Because it's a melee attack, this leaves the chastity vulnerable to reprisal from the party. The chastity uses its Dedication action in conjunction with a fairly minor spell or effect, avoiding more catastrophic magic like *divine word*.

Harder Tactics – The chastity opens with *mass suggestion*, compelling its enemies to prefer unfavorable strategies. It will support any of its allies with healing, with *beacon of hope* cast on its strongest teammates. It then takes the Dodge action and moves into battle, afflicting as many creatures as possible with its Aura of Purity.

PLOT HOOKS

Unexpected Inquisition. A zealous group of religious fanatics are using a sublime chastity to judge those they suspect of being "corrupted by malevolent forces." Because of the chastity's thoroughness, almost everyone put in front of it is deemed tainted in some manner, enabling the fanatics to judge others with impunity, passing strict verdicts perhaps harsher than merited.

TALIEN'S NOTES

I have detailed in this compendium three of the holy virtues: sublime chastity, gracious humility, and adamant diligence. These are the most prolific and active, those most prone to taking physical form on the material plane. But there are four others. Balancing temperance, which restrains excesses of food and drink such that half the population of a town starves or dies of thirst. Unending patience, a long-running virtue that affects the subtlest changes and postpones events that are not yet ready to occur. Abounding charity, the scourge of the wealthy. Many a noble has lost their fortune to a sudden swell of altruism from an unknown source. And finally, loving kindness. Wars end when soldiers drop their arms and embrace as friends. Those same soldiers often turn on the leaders who sent them to battle, condemning them to the last with tears streaming down their cheeks.

Unpassable Test. A young prince is to have his virtue tested by a sublime chastity to determine his fitness to wed a princess. Unfortunately, the prince has had more than a few romantic "indiscretions" and is unlikely to pass. The word on the street is his family will pay a king's random to any who can help the young man fool the celestial examination.

Vanguard. A squadron of angels is on a mission to recover a magical item from the characters. Supporting them is a sublime chastity with standing orders to inflict as little collateral damage as possible. The celestials are patient and honorable, attempting to negotiate before turning to violence.

TREASURE

Money corrupts and tempts others, so a sublime chastity never carries treasure unless absolutely necessary. However, the masonry that make up a chastity's body is powerfully magical and can be used as a material component for spells. A typical sublime chastity provides 20 pounds of usable masonry when slain. When a creature casts a spell, it can provide 2 pounds of masonry as a material component, which is consumed when the spell is cast. Doing so causes the spell be purified by holy energies, making it immune to effects that would counter or dispel it for the spell's duration.

ECOLOGY

The sublime chastity does not exist before a sufficiently lustful society's actions causes it to manifest. Once created, it persists in and around the area that so offended its heavenly sensibilities until it deems it sufficiently redeemed. After accomplishing this solemn purpose, the sublime chastity usually vanishes in a blast of radiant light. Some, however, linger on and roam the land in search of further sins to correct. Conversations with a sublime chastity are either highly uncomfortable or completely pointless. The celestials rarely speak to those they deem sufficiently pure, not seeing much of a point in doing so. To those the chastity seeks to steer toward a more moral existence, the creature is overwhelmingly critical in a practical and open manner. The longer the chastity gets ignored or defied, the stronger this critique becomes until finally the creature resorts to more forceful methods.

GRACIOUS HUMILITY

When gracious humility manifests, even the mightiest must kneel. For as much power as the humility possesses, it never slays its foes. A bizarre entity even by extraplanar standards, a gracious humility appears as a miniature island ringed by multicolored halos. The landscape of each humility is unique, but the biomes always appear quaint, peaceful, and habitable. Those that succumb to its awe-inspiring power are imprisoned upon this tiny realm where they serve penance until they find redemption in humble supplication. For the irredeemable, this existence stretches into maddening eternity.

SUBLIME CHASTITY

Large celestial, neutral good

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 161 (19d10 + 57)
Speed 30 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	25 (+7)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +12, Int +8, Wis +10, Cha +6
Skills History +8, Insight +15, Perception +10, Persuasion +11
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities radiant
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 20
Languages all
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Aura of Purity. The chastity is surrounded by an aura of pure goodness in a 60-foot radius. At the start of each of the chastity's turns, each enemy creature in the area must make a Charisma ability check (no associated skill) to demonstrate its purity of spirit, the DC of which is equal to the creature's CR or character level (whichever is higher). On a failure, the creature is considered impure, gaining the following penalties against the chastity and its allies until the start of the chastity's next turn.

The creature deals half damage.

The creature has disadvantage on saving throws.

The creature feels great shame for its actions.

Bastion of Faith. When the chastity takes the Dodge action, it gains a +5 bonus to its AC for as long as it is benefitting from the Dodge action.

Divine Conviction. The chastity cannot be forced or compelled to act in a manner that goes against its morality.

Innate Spellcasting. The chastity's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *beacon of hope*, *calm emotions*, *command*, *hold person*
5/day: *death ward*, *dispel evil and good*, *heal*
3/day: *divine word*, *mass suggestion*, *resurrection*
1/day: *geas*

ACTIONS

Dedication. The chastity prays for success. Until the end of its next turn, the next time the chastity forces a creature to attempt a saving throw, that creature cannot succeed on that saving throw.

Faithful Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* automatic hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage and 31 (7d8) radiant damage.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a gracious humility with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

GRACIOUS HUMILITY LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	Gracious humility is one of the holy virtues, a celestial being that seeks to correct extreme pride and arrogance among mortals. It traps its victims in a miniscule prison from which there is no escape but to truly repent of one's sins. Most are unable to satisfy the virtue's high standards, and they live the rest of their days trapped within.
23	This holy virtue attacks primarily by projecting bolts of lightning over great distances. Creatures that are struck by any of its attacks are compelled to throw themselves to the ground in shame. Only those with the strongest of wills can resist.
29	Despite its high speed and ability to teleport, the gracious humility is not quick to react to danger. Fast spells like *disintegrate* are quite effective. However, the humility regains a portion of its vitality each time it succumbs to an effect or takes a critical hit, making single, powerful attacks the preferred tactic.

TACTICS

The gracious humility is a powerful and mobile creature. It can fly at a good speed, but its real agility comes from its Teleport ability. The humility can move up to 500 feet when it teleports, but its Holy Lightning attack reaches 120 feet, so there's no reason to teleport more than 120 feet away from at least one character unless the humility is fleeing from the battle.

Make four attacks with Holy Lightning every round unless two or more characters are in melee with the humility, at which point you should swap to making two attacks and using Teleport to get out of harm's way. When teleporting, try to arrive in a location that is within 30 feet of multiple characters to take advantage of the damaging flash it causes. Because Holy Lightning can be used as a melee attack, the humility does not suffer disadvantage when attacking creatures next to it. Remember, though, that it still has disadvantage if attacking a target at range while another hostile creature is within 5 feet of it.

Save Pride Comes before the Fall for when the humility is low on hit points, ideally 100 or fewer. Lastly, don't forget its two important traits: Grace in Failure, which restores hit points on failed saving throws or when the humility suffers a critical hit, and Humble before Grace, which can knock characters prone almost indefinitely and make it much harder for melee characters to get in range.

Easier Tactics – Don't Teleport often, and when you do, try to arrive in a location that damages the fewest characters (or none) with its damaging flash. Spread the damage from Holy Lightning around, and avoid targeting characters who are low on hit points, because reducing them to 0 takes them out of the fight.

Harder Tactics – Take advantage of the humility's fly speed to leverage its 120-foot range. Some of the most dangerous spells have a maximum range of 120 feet or less, and avoiding those leaves only ranged attackers (and warlocks with the Eldritch Spear invocation) as a serious threat. Save Pride Comes before the Fall for when the humility has 50 hit points or fewer, and hit someone who fails the saving throw with two shots of Holy Lightning to take the target out. For a really awful encounter, you can retreat after capturing a character, using Teleport to move 500 feet away each turn.

PLOT HOOKS

Jailbreak. A famous hero has been imprisoned by a gracious humility while in possession of an artifact required to prevent a coming calamity. The celestial refuses to release its prisoner and quickly flees from any conflict. An elite team is required to hunt down, capture, and maybe even slay the wondrous creature to prevent the coming catastrophe.

The Gracious Humility

Freedom is key to mortal happiness. We—and I say "we" in the broadest, cross-species sense of the word—value freedom above our lives. Countless historical examples point to revolutions and uprisings against overwhelming forces in pursuit of freedom. It is with this in mind that I say to you, gracious humility is the cruellest of all the heavenly virtues. A strange sentence for one not familiar with the virtues in their celestial manifestations, but I assure you it will make sense as you continue to read. A gracious humility entombs its foes in a microcosmic penitentiary that resembles a paradise. There they serve out a sentence that lasts until the creature is redeemed and properly humbled in the eyes of the holy virtue. Generally, this takes centuries, long enough that most of the victims perish of old age before achieving redemption.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Barbarians, Dexterity (Targeting), Lightning (Protection from), Rangers, Rogues, Wizards

Foils: Clerics, Druids, Hit Points (Low), Monks, Radiant (Damage)

Friendly Fire. A gracious humility was summoned to aid in battle against a mighty evil dragon. While the forces of good were victorious, the humility accidently knocked out and subsequently imprisoned the high cleric of a virtuous order who was participating in the battle. So far, the cleric has been unable to free herself, leading to an awkward standoff between the embarrassed celestial and a horde of angry followers.

Harsh Lesson. Immediately after the characters are triumphant over an extraordinarily difficult foe, a gracious humility appears and swiftly takes them all out. Its landscape is an idyllic farmland which the party must cultivate and come to appreciate in order to satisfy the celestial enough to free them.

TREASURE

When a creature is able to free itself from a gracious humility's confinement, it is granted a special boon by the celestial as a reward for becoming a humble and gracious being. This boon permanently increases the creature's Charisma score by 2 (to a maximum of 22), grants it proficiency in Persuasion, and the creature gains the following ideal, which replaces its previous ideal.

Ideal: Humility. My power is merely a means through which I can serve others and the world. The significance of myself is nothing next to the fantastical existence that makes up the multiverse.

ECOLOGY

Like all holy virtues, a gracious humility is an abstract idea until it manifests in response to egregious pride on the material plane. Once it forms, it centers itself in the area that caused its appearance and remains there until it is destroyed or called away by powerful magic. This can render a vast swath of land essentially uninhabitable, with only those utterly devoid of pride allowed to enter its domain unmolested. A gracious humility is inquisitive, appearing completely unthreatening until it decides those to whom it speaks need a proper lesson. In combat the creature does not view its power as harmful, acting like a mother trying to give a difficult child a time-out.

ADAMANT DILIGENCE

The manifestation of an adamant diligence is an unmissable event. It appears as a heavenly storm, thick clouds dappled with radiant light. From within, a huge, shimmering orb projects blasts of devastating power over immense distances. The diligence sees all and tolerates no trespass. These creatures are snipers and assassins of the highest caliber, laying out even the most evasive enemies with unearthly precision. The appearance of an adamant diligence is a calamity of epic proportions, for few are virtuous enough to avoid its gaze.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an adamant diligence with an Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

GRACIOUS HUMILITY

Gargantuan celestial, neutral good

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 367 (21d20 + 147)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	25 (+7)	17 (+3)	26 (+8)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +13, Int +9, Wis +14, Cha +9
Skills History +9, Insight +20, Perception +14, Persuasion+15
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities radiant
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages all
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

TRAITS

Grace in Failure. When the humility fails a saving throw or is critically hit, it regains 30 hit points.

Humble before Grace. When the humility deals damage to a creature, the creature must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or fall prone in shame for 1 minute. A creature must remain prone for the entire duration and immediately falls prone if forced to its feet by outside influence. An affected creature can attempt a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Prison of Humility. When the humility reduces a creature to 0 hit points, it instead reduces it to 1 hit point and magically teleports the creature onto the miniature landscape that makes up its nucleus. The creature is shrunk down to proportions appropriate for the landscape in the process. An affected creature cannot escape the nucleus by any means nor can it be restored to its original size by any power short of a *wish* spell. This effect only ends if the humility is slain or the creature attains true humility and graciousness (at the humility's discretion).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The humility makes four attacks, or two attacks and one other action.

Holy Lightning. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 34 (4d12 + 8) lightning damage.

Pride Comes before the Fall (Recharge 6). The humility unleashes a wave of divine energy in a 300-foot radius. Each enemy creature in that area with current hit points greater than the humility's current hit points must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or have their current hit points reduced to the humility's current hit points.

Teleport. The humility magically teleports up to 500 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. When the humility appears in the space, it emits a flash of radiant light in a 30-foot radius. Enemy creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or take 36 (8d8) radiant damage, or half as much on a success.

ADAMANT DILIGENCE LORE	
DC	**INFORMATION**
19	The holy virtue called adamant diligence appears when mortal beings grow too slothful. It appears as a radiant cloud and wreaks devastation upon all within its gaze. It believes that conflict and fear fuel diligent action, and it hopes to be destroyed by those who survive its wrath.
24	The adamant diligence has an incredible range; it is capable of firing precise bolts of energy at anything it can see. Its vision pierces illusory and magical concealment, and it can blast through even the most stalwart of magical barriers with minimal effort. Finally, it is surrounded by a thick cloud of swirling smoke that makes targeting the adamant diligence a challenge.
30	The adamant diligence can shoot anything it can see and possesses truesight, making invisibility and illusions useless. Large, physical obstructions that block its vision can work, though the adamant diligence will tear through them quickly. Teleporting into melee is the best option, as long as those engaging the diligence are capable of flight. Whenever the diligence uses an exceptionally powerful attack, that indicates it hasn't moved from its location, making it a somewhat easier target than usual.

The Adamant Diligence

The watcher above, the falling sky, and many other names herald the arrival of an adamant diligence. Years ago, I watched Zau-Hek endure the wrath of the heavens, giving me an opportunity to work my magics. Her indestructible shield Arcus earned its epithet that day, shrugging off impacts that shook the sky. Once I had incapacitated the celestial, she hurled her spear clean through its center. Unfortunately, she left immediately after confirming it had been destroyed, leaving me to help a nearly obliterated city to its proverbial feet.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Artillery

Favors: Fighters, Flight, Piercing (Protection from), Rangers, Sorcerers, Warlocks

Foils: Barbarians, Bards, Rogues, Spells (Barriers), Stealth, Wizards

TACTICS

As an artillery creature, the adamant diligence is most effective when it can remain safe from attack and spend turn after turn making attacks unhindered. Its Cloud Cover trait is important, requiring characters to guess its location within the cloud and imposing disadvantage on attacks. The diligence does not have to remain at the cloud's center and should be somewhat mobile. Alternate between using Heavenly Snipe without moving and maneuvering to keep the party guessing while making four Star Shot attacks.

Dispersion is best used when the party manages to engage the diligence in melee with more than one character, or when they otherwise have a reliable way of targeting it, but it does prevent the diligence from making any attacks that turn. Don't forget the Penetrating Shots feature—try to target any characters that are lined up perfectly with another to potentially land two (or more) hits. This, paired with Heavenly Snipe, is devastating. Using the adamant diligence with any allied creatures that can slow, restrain, or otherwise stop the party from engaging effectively makes the encounter downright lethal.

Easier Tactics – Don't use Heavenly Snipe. If you rely on Star Shot, the adamant diligence will deal less damage, be more predictable, and be forced to remain within 500 feet of the party. Those changes alone make it much less of a threat.

Harder Tactics – The human eye can see for many miles under ideal conditions, and it's fair to assume the adamant diligence possesses even more acute senses. With Heavenly Smite having unlimited range and the adamant diligence capable of flight, if you position it high up in the sky you can rain devastation down on the party unopposed. This is more of a puzzle than a fight, as the party will need to find a way to bridge the huge distance quickly before they can even start combatting the adamant diligence.

PLOT HOOKS

Trial of Heaven. An adamant diligence is predicted to appear above a bustling metropolis in seven days, seeking to ensure the prosperous people have not grown lazy in their success. The inhabitants prepare a mighty defense, but it is feared to not be enough. Heroes from across the world flock to the city, drawn by a promise of wealth and a glorious battle worthy of legend.

Price of Failure. A monastic sanctuary on a mountain peak has been laid to waste by an adamant diligence who found the ancient masters therein lacking. Former students wish to retrieve the site's sacred texts, which contain secret techniques to deadly martial arts. Unfortunately, the diligence has chosen to remain near the monastery, hoping that a thirst for vengeance will bring forth a worthy challenger.

Death from Above. An adamant diligence has flown to incredible heights to better challenge the world. Somehow enhancing its already prodigious vision, the creature has been tirelessly raining heavenly destruction across multiple continents. Old rivalries are set aside to find a solution to the problem, namely, how will anyone even reach the creature when it floats in the upper atmosphere?

TREASURE

An adamant diligence cannot carry treasure, but for those who manage to defeat it there lies a special reward. When the diligence is slain, each creature it deems worthy within 1 mile gains truesight out to 120 feet. This effect is nonmagical and permanently causes the eyes of affected creatures to glow with a golden light.

ECOLOGY

Unlike most other holy virtues, an adamant diligence expects to be defeated. It wants mortals to rise up and overcome it. Unfortunately, as it is one of the most powerful of the holy virtues this outcome seldom happens. More often, because the adamant diligence doesn't hold back, it eradicates all but the most innocent for miles around. Only the intervention of powerful heroes or even the gods themselves can take down an adamant diligence. Until then, the area around it becomes a wasteland devoid of all life. The creature is resolute in its belief that only merciless opposition can bring out the true character of heroes, and it can almost never be reasoned with. In the rare instance these creatures do speak, their voices boom like thunder, echoing for miles.

ADAMANT DILIGENCE

Huge celestial, neutral good

Armor Class 23 (natural armor)
Hit Points 406 (28d12 + 224)
Speed 0 ft., fly 90 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	30 (+10)	26 (+8)	20 (+5)	25 (+7)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +16, Wis +15, Cha +14
Skills Insight +23, Perception +23, Stealth +26
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities radiant
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned, unconscious
Senses truesight 1 mile, passive Perception 33
Languages all
Challenge 28 (120,000 XP)

TRAITS

Cloud Cover. As a bonus action, the diligence surrounds itself with thick clouds that completely fill a 30-foot-radius sphere. The sphere spreads around corners, and its area is heavily obscured for creatures other than the diligence and its allies. The cloud does not move with the diligence, but the diligence can re-center the cloud on itself as a bonus action. The cloud lasts until the diligence dismisses it with another bonus action or it creates a second cloud using this feature.

Find the Center. On each of its turns, if the diligence does not move from its space or take any actions other than its Heavenly Snipe attack, it deals an additional 90 (20d8) radiant damage on a successful hit with that attack.

Penetrating Shots. When the diligence makes a successful ranged weapon attack and exceeds the target's AC by 10 or more, the projectile pierces through the target and continues onward in a straight line away from the diligence. If the projectile encounters another creature or object along its path, that creature or object becomes a target of the attack as well (as though the diligence had made the original attack against it). If the projectile encounters a magical effect or spell that would stop it, the projectile is destroyed and the spell or magical effect ends.

Unerring Precision. The diligence's weapon attacks are magical. Additionally, the diligence has advantage on ranged attacks and its ranged attacks ignore half cover and three-quarters cover.

Virtuous Vigilance. The diligence has advantage on saving throws and ability checks against creatures with a lower Wisdom score than it.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The diligence makes four Star Shot attacks, or it makes two Star Shot attacks and takes the Ready action to ready a Heavenly Snipe to use against the first enemy that moves that it can see.

Dispersion. Until the end of its next turn, the diligence expands the radius of its Cloud Cover feature to 120 feet. Additionally, the diligence immediately magically teleports to an unoccupied space within the affected area.

Heavenly Snipe. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, unlimited range, one target. *Hit:* 65 (10d10 + 10) piercing damage and 55 (10d10) force damage.

Star Shot. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, range 500 ft., one target. *Hit:* 43 (6d10 +10) piercing damage.

Utterances of Truespeech

The creatures deemed "utterances" are researchers on the cusp of fully grasping the primordial language of the multiverse: truespeech. These humanoids have the gleaned the merest glimpse into this phenomenal power but have yet to unlock its full potential even in their dedicated field of study. Such strength cannot come without cost, and the utterances of truespeech have paid dearly. Truespeech is a fickle force after all—even a single misspoken syllable can have catastrophic consequences. This can be seen in the twisted forms of each of the four utterances, barely recognizable after years of practicing an art well beyond their ability.

Despite their failings, the utterances can still wield the potent power of truespeech with deadly force. Each has focused on a specific "syntax" of the primordial language: evil, life, knowledge, and destruction. The creatures are reflections of these fields in both body and mind, completely obsessed with delving deeper into the mysteries of truespeech, consequences be damned. They are scholars, scientists, and artists in the extreme, sharing in a cult-like fanaticism for the power of the spoken



The Utterance of Damnation

Fiend worshippers. Nothing good ever comes from cavorting with the lower planes, and I am looking squarely at fiendish warlocks when I say that. Though they draw on powers from the hells and the abyss, I've dubbed the utterance of damnation "hellspeakers." I said the term once during a lecture and my students seemed to like it, so it stuck.

Hellspeakers are easy to spot—lots of black, bones, and fire. Skull masks are popular as well. Their surefire tell is the retinue of minor fiends that accompany them everywhere. If you spot an utterance of damnation alone, tread carefully. Their help is not far behind. Word to the wise: do not make deals with a hellspeaker. They share devils' skill with loopholes and demons' taste for raw chaos.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Elite

Favors: Area-of-Effect, Clerics, Paladins, Wizards

Foils: Barbarians, Fire (Damage), Melee, Fighters, Sorcerers

word. Should the utterances of truespeech ever achieve their dream of mastering truespeech, they will have fallen so far in the process the only outcome will be a malevolent threat to the multiverse.

UTTERANCE OF DAMNATION

Speakers of primordial evil and profane blasphemy, utterances of damnation (also called "hellspeakers") are fiendish humanoids that know the vilest words ever conceived. One rarely becomes an utterance of damnation by talent or by study. The mysteries of truespeech can be attained through selling one's soul, or a collection of the souls of others, to a power from the lower planes. Tieflings make the most common hellspeakers because they have family connections that can negotiate slightly better terms in exchange for knowledge. Utterances of damnation are a mix of the worst of devils and demons. They love to be technically honest and exploit a loophole or lie of omission, and they stab a would-be ally as soon as the opportunity arises. The bodies of these creatures have atrophied into purple, withered flesh. Their faces have long since lost their eyes, while their mouths and tongues are grotesquely distended to better articulate the complex language of truespeech. When uttering its syllables, their tongues blaze with a vicious hellfire.

TRUESPEECH IN YOUR GAME

The concept that objects and creatures in the universe have "truenames" and that there is a language to command reality itself is a concept well represented in fantasy. When using the utterances of truespeech in your game, how you interpret this primordial force in your world is at your discretion. By default, bards already command this power in some capacity, but you can certainly take it further.

One way to do so is making truespeech an epic force in your world. Truespeech is a concept represented in the *Epic Legacy Core Rulebook*, a 5th Edition supplement by 2CGaming. It is the primary source of power for bards of 21st level or higher (called truespeakers) to manipulate reality with ease. If you intend to take your game that far, this encounter can give your party a small taste of things to come. It can also serve as a standalone element in your world to be developed as you see fit, perhaps a genuine glimpse into the power the gods used to create all things.

TALIEN'S NOTES

No beings exemplify my continual frustration in the scholarly elite more than those declared "utterances of truespeech" by the simpering delegators of the world. Witnessing their stumbling attempts to gather and focus the intricacies of truespeech while maintaining an overwhelming hubris leaves me impossibly impatient, as the aged watching the feckless youth stumble where they did so long ago. Nevertheless, their potency shouldn't be understated. Beware when dealing with these powerful and ignorant forces.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an utterance of damnation with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

UTTERANCE OF DAMNATION LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	An utterance of damnation has learned just enough truespeech to not only manifest fiends but exert some measure of control over them as well. Most impressively, the utterance can dismiss these fiends without issue, solving the common problem of devils and demons run amok that most summoners leave in their wake.
20	Hellspeakers, as utterances of damnation are commonly called, are talented spellcasters that can easily disable, dominate, or split up foes. Their manifested fiends provide additional support and a flexible point of origin for their spells.
24	Utterances of damnation are frequently tailed by devils. When the utterance casts *mass suggestion*, it tells its victims to sign the next contract they are offered. Then the devils pounce, and the utterance watches gleefully.

TACTICS

Start the fight with In Times of Need to saturate the battlefield with imps or quasits. These are the utterance's main source of damage and will help draw attacks away from it. Note that In Times of Need isn't part of the Multiattack action, so it is the only action the utterance can take on a turn. After that, choose the utterance's spells based on the party's composition. Start with the big ones: *forcecage* to divide the battlefield, *mass suggestion* against a party low on clerics, druids, and paladins, or *dominate monster* to turn a rogue or barbarian against the party.

Designing encounters with an utterance of damnation is a little tricky because they benefit from support of almost any kind. Melee combatants keep the party busy while the fiendish entities tear them apart. Ranged attackers add their firepower to the hellspeaker's already impressive ranged barrage, and additional spellcasters can either support the utterance or further debilitate the party, all of which make an already dangerous foe that much stronger. However, the death of the utterance is almost always enough to break the morale of any of its allies.

Easier Tactics – Be careful with using *forcecage*. Against an unprepared party, it can knock a character (or two, or three) out of the fight for the entire battle. When conjuring fiends, cluster them together so they are easier to take out with a single, powerful spell. The utterance should start combat fairly close to the party, as once a barbarian or paladin is in melee it's not getting away.

Harder Tactics – If the utterance starts the battle with *foresight* cast on itself, all allied fiends have advantage on their attacks due to the Fiendish Slaves trait. This, of course, is in addition to the already substantial benefits of going into a fight with *foresight*. Start the fight with *mass suggestion* for a devastating opener ("grovel for the next eight hours" is an especially nasty request), and then use In Times of Need to get some damage dealers on the field.

Finally, as the entities persist for an hour, consider starting combat with a few of them already in existence. Manifesting them takes but a moment, so it is rare that an utterance would be without them. If you are feeling particularly cruel, use *planar binding* to conjure even more powerful fiends to serve the utterance. However, such fiends should never be of a CR higher than the utterance.

PLOT HOOKS

Wish Granter. Conditions in a town suddenly improve, with dozens of commoners striking it rich, falling in love, and generally having their dreams come true. Then, six months later, they die under mysterious circumstances.

Line of Credit. A helpless ally of the party suddenly gains great power and bails them out of a difficult situation. The ally denies that they paid a high price for the power, but there may be unanticipated consequences for everyone involved—consequences of the hellish variety.

Performance Enhancer. An opera singer loses his voice, and everyone assumes his career is over. A week later, he makes a miraculous recovery and his voice is stronger than ever—so strong he blows the roof off the theater.

TREASURE

In the heart of each utterance of damnation burns a mote of pure hellfire that blazes even after death. It makes a potent source of heat, energy, and even food (for fiends). A mote of hellfire functions similarly to a torch, but the flame cannot be extinguished, destroyed, or suppressed by effects that would ordinarily affect fire. Only a *dispel evil and good* spell is able to destroy a mote of hellfire permanently, and such motes are typically worth around 4,000 gp, assuming the right buyer can be found. Selling one is sure to attract unwholesome attention.

UTTERANCE OF DAMNATION

Medium humanoid (any), chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 180 (19d10 + 76)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +9
Skills Deception +9, Insight +6, Perception +6, Persuasion +9
Damage Immunities fire
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

TRAITS

Fiendish Slaves. When the utterance casts a spell, it can choose to treat any fiend allies that it can see as the point of origin for that spell.

Additionally, attacks made by allied fiends that can see the utterance benefit from spells and magical effects that the utterance is also benefiting from (such as *hex* or *foresight* spells).

Roar of Power. The utterance is incapable of speaking at any volume lower than a shout and is immune to any effect that would prevent it from speaking.

Spellcasting. The utterance is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The utterance has the following spells prepared.

At will: *fireball*, *hex*, *hold monster*
1/day each: *dominate monster*, *forcecage*, *foresight*, *geas*, *planar binding*, *mass suggestion*
1/year: *wish* (can only cast to grant the wishes of humanoids who are under the effects of a *geas* spell cast by the utterance).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The utterance uses Manifest Fiend and then uses either Crashing Yell or casts a spell.

Crashing Yell (Recharge 4–6). The utterance lets loose a thunderous shout. All creatures within 10 feet of the utterance must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 33 (6d10) thunder damage and be pushed 20 feet away from the utterance and knocked prone. A successful saving throw halves the damage and prevents both being pushed and knocked prone.

Hellfire Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (6d6 + 5) fire damage. If the target has resistance to fire damage, it instead does not have resistance to fire damage from this attack.

In Times of Need (1/Short Rest). The utterance uses Manifest Fiend four times.

Manifest Fiend. The utterance magically manifests a being of truespeech that resembles an imp or quasit, which appears in an unoccupied space within 30 feet of the utterance. Fiends created in this manner act on the utterance's turn and can take an action to make a Hellfire Bolt attack as though the utterance had made the attack (using the utterance's bonus to hit). The utterance can have a maximum of four fiends created in this manner; they vanish 1 hour after their creation or until the utterance is slain, whichever comes first. The creature is considered a native denizen of the plane on which it was manifested.

ECOLOGY

As expected, utterances of damnation travel in the company of fiends. Though they share much in common with demons, they tend toward devils as their companions as they're much easier to control and are more predictable. They may ally with other creatures for a time, if it suits them, but such alliances are always temporary and always end in a lot of hellfire, with a cackling utterance of damnation fleeing the scene as it burns to ashes behind it. To further their research of truespeech, an utterance of damnation must have a base of operation from which it can call forth more sources of knowledge. Because few civilized societies tolerate such activities, an utterance will renovate abandoned buildings or clear out dungeons to be more suitable to their needs. Such locations quickly become overrun with fiends, much to the detriment of those living nearby.

UTTERANCE OF BLOOD

Blood is the sweet nectar of life. It is fitting, then, that those who value power and control would jump at the chance to control the life-giving essence of blood with but a word. Called utterances of blood, these true-speaking creatures twist the essence of life to serve their own ambitions.

The Utterance of Blood

You will know utterances of blood by their robes of dark crimson. They carry vials of blood and a panoply of syringes, knives, and other implements for the extraction of sanguine fluids. Their knowledge of medicine is unparalleled, but I would have to be in the direst straits imaginable to surrender myself to their ministrations. They are best treated as consultants, not surgeons.

To become an utterance of blood, one must unearth the syllables of truespeech associated with life. Testing such syllables can be tumultuous at best, and a willingness to experiment on flesh produces grotesque results. This only fuels the paranoia and delusions that utterances accumulate, and more power does them few favors in the etiquette department. If they ask for blood, make sure you promise them someone else's.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Leader

Favors: Clerics, Disease (Protection from), Healing, Monks, Paladins

Foils: Rangers, Rogues, Single-Target, Sorcerers, Stealth

Well versed in anatomy and medicine, these utterances seek to understand truespeech with surgical precision. With each syllable of truespeech they tinker with the essence of life, unnaturally enhancing their own existence and violating the forms of others. Like their compatriots, utterances of blood are deformed by their practices, sickly pale with oversized mouths, no eyes, and a four-foot tongue of crimson red. With the bedside manner of a professional doctor, an utterance of blood seeks out new biological samples to study. An utterance of blood is always happy to make a deal, particularly if that deal involves it getting access to large quantities of fresh blood or, better yet, blood-filled test subjects. None survive their perverse experiments.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an utterance of blood with an Intelligence (Religion) or Wisdom (Medicine) ability check.

UTTERANCE OF BLOOD LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	As with all utterances, those that master blood have studied every resource they can find on truespeech. They are sometimes called bloodspeakers and have a keen insight into diseases of the flesh.
21	Utterances of blood use their own lifeforce to fuel their most potent abilities but can siphon some of the blood lost from nearby creatures and utilize it for their own purposes.
25	Utterances of blood are skilled at remedying both the ails of body and mind and at inflicting terrible disease. They can only perform their work on creatures with blood and have a great fear of constructs, oozes, and undead.

TACTICS

The utterance of blood is a support creature. It is at its best when working in tandem with powerful monsters, especially those that thrive in melee combat and can keep pesky characters like barbarians and monks away from the utterance. In a fight, it should focus on spreading Blood Plague as quickly as possible, targeting those who rely on attack rolls but tend to have low Constitution saving throws, such as rangers, rogues, and warlocks. Then, if the utterance or any of its allies are suffering, it uses Life Transference to restore them. If no one is struggling, it uses Mirror Vitae on any threats it suspects are less wise than other enemies, like fighters and barbarians. Be generous with spending hit points (or temporary hit points), and rely on the damage taken by both the party and the utterance's allies to recharge its temporary hit points. Keep Blood Armor active every round.

Easier Tactics – To keep the pressure off the party, use only one ability each turn: Blood Plague, Mirror Vitae, or Life Transference. Avoid using Blood Armor so the utterance is easier to hit. When building an encounter with an utterance of blood, don't give it too much help. An utterance alone is much less dangerous.

Harder Tactics – Half of making this fight harder is giving the utterance better backup. Strong melee monsters are great allies, and anything that can push characters around or give them disadvantage on Constitution saving throws will make it harder for the party to counteract the utterance's abilities. Additionally, anything that can cast *silence* makes a potent ally to the utterance, because none of its abilities require speaking, and the spell will prevent the party from using healing abilities like *lesser restoration* to neutralize Blood Plague. The other half is focusing on using Blood Plague and Mirror Vitae early to do a lot of damage to fragile but dangerous foes like monks, rogues, and wizards. Having an enemy in melee combat with an utterance of blood isn't that detrimental because none of its abilities require attack rolls.

PLOT HOOKS

Is There a Doctor in the House? An outbreak of a rare disease that resists magical cures spurs the party toward an utterance of blood. Perhaps the utterance is the cause, and perhaps it is also the only source of a cure. The situation gets more complicated if a party member is infected, especially if the character is a carrier without symptoms and spreads the disease to several towns accidentally.

Blood Heist. When a vampire begins stealing valuable supplies (or humanoid cattle) from the utterance's storeroom, it recruits the party for help. It might offer to pay them in coin or in enhancements to their physical forms. Alternately, the party might team up with an utterance of blood to take down a vampire by creating a cursed blood cocktail to serve as the vampire's last meal.

Healing Hands. An utterance of blood is employed by a local hospital as a healer and is truly working miracles. It's also taking all the blood from terminal patients and subjecting them to horrific experiments…but they were going to die anyway, right?

TREASURE

Utterances of blood are accomplished doctors and experts in the healing arts. The tinctures and poultices an utterance of blood creates in its spare time make excellent potions, though their craft always comes at the great expense of experiment subjects. If an utterance of blood has a laboratory (and most do), you can choose from the table (or roll 1d8 to choose randomly) to see what magical potions it stores there.

UTTERANCE OF BLOOD

Medium humanoid (any), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (21 with Blood Armor)
Hit Points 231 (22d10 + 110)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +9, Cha +10
Skills Medicine +14, Perception +9
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Blood Armor. At the start of each of its turns, the utterance can lose 5 hit points to magically shroud itself in armor made of blood, increasing its AC to 21 until the end of its next turn.

Bloodsight. The utterance automatically succeeds on Perception checks to detect flesh-and-blood creatures.

Crimson Craft. When the utterance gains temporary hit points and already has temporary hit points, the new temporary hit points are added to its temporary hit points instead of replacing them. The utterance can have a number of temporary hit points equal to its hit point maximum.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The utterance uses Blood Plague, then uses either Mirror Vitae or Life Transference.

Blood Plague. A flesh-and-blood creature the utterance can see within 60 feet must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or contract a virulent disease. On a failure, wounds immediately open along the creature's skin and it loses 28 (8d6) hit points.

Additionally, the creature has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks while infected. At the start of each of its turns the creature can choose to attempt a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, curing the disease on a success. On a failure, the creature loses 28 (8d6) hit points.

Life Transference. The utterance of blood loses a number of temporary hit points, and a single flesh-and-blood creature the utterance can see gains an equal number of temporary hit points. Temporary hit points gained from this feature are lost when the creature finishes a short or long rest.

Mirror Vitae. The utterance chooses a creature it can see within 60 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or its blood is linked to the utterance's. While linked, when the utterance takes damage, it instead takes half damage (rounded down) and the target takes the remaining damage. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the link on a success.

REACTIONS

Harvest Life. When a flesh-and-blood creature other than the utterance within 60 feet takes damage or loses hit points, the utterance can take a reaction to gain temporary hit points equal to the damage dealt or hit points lost. Temporary hit points gained by this feature are lost when the utterance finishes a short or long rest.

UTTERANCE OF BLOOD POTIONS	
D8	**POTION**
1–4	*Potion of supreme healing*
5–6	*Potion of vitality*
7	*Potion of invulnerability*
8	*Potion of longevity*

ECOLOGY

Bloodspeakers are solitary by nature. They cannot resist experimenting on everyone they encounter, be they friend or foe. They keep meticulous journals on their research, authoring enough volumes on the subject of truespeech to fill a small library. They jealously guard their findings, for such ambitions are purely for their own gain. An utterance seldom associates with anyone they consider a peer, preferring to surround themselves with minions they can comfortably control and experiment upon. They will lair near civilized societies, if only to gain greater access to truespeech lore and test subjects. Their laboratories are messy affairs strewn with blood, paper, chemicals, and surgical tables. Peaceful coexistence with an utterance is rare but achievable. There is much to gain from an utterance of blood's expertise in the field of medicine, and more than one plague has been cured by their services bought with a hefty supply of test subjects.

The Utterance of Erudition

My closest intellectual kin among the utterances, the utterances of erudition—or "truthspeakers"—have learned much of the mysterious language of truespeech. In typical instances they can merely tap into sources of arcane energy to replicate some of the most powerful known magics. More disturbing is the book of truth this type of utterance inevitably creates. These tomes, when held by a truthspeaker, can reveal considerable information about any creature unfortunate enough to cross the utterance's path. Talk about an invasion of privacy.

The utterance of erudition displays more arrogance than any other variety of utterance and also most closely resembles an unkempt university professor. This, I believe, is not a coincidence, but I digress. They wear robes that are simple, don't quite fit, and are out of style. Whether this is an intentional attempt to shun social convention or they truly believe they are dressed to impress, I cannot say.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller

Favors: Clerics, Hit Points (High), Paladins, Rangers, Wisdom (High)

Foils: Bards, Mobility (Low), Spells (Targeted), Sorcerers, Wizards

UTTERANCE OF ERUDITION

There are those whose life is consumed with epistemology: the study of knowledge. Few forces in the universe provide greater insight into different ways of knowing than truespeech, tempting scholars down a perilous path. Those who aspire to wield such forces rarely succeed, instead becoming desperate failures called utterances of erudition, beings for whom enlightenment lies tantalizingly out of reach. The kind of people who become utterances of erudition are well acquainted with books, libraries, and long nights of study. This doesn't change when they begin to understand—if anything, these habits become even more pronounced. They relish an opportunity to learn new information, always to further their field of study, and will spare no expense to expand their understanding of the subject. Their distended tongues are inscribed with magical symbols while their tiny stunted eyes are suitable only for reading fine text by candlelight.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an utterance of erudition with an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (History) ability check.

UTTERANCE OF ERUDITION LORE	
DC	**INFORMATION**
15	There are many tales of creatures that can kill with but a word, drawing power from a mysterious force that surpasses even magic. A being able to wield such power without casting a spell is a dangerous prospect, especially because there are few reliable means of countering it.
19	The syllables this creature uses are fragments of truespeech, the language the gods used to shape the world. It has supernatural insight into the vulnerabilities of other creatures and channels powerful blasts of radiant energy alongside its truespeech. As a result, radiant attacks are ineffective against it.
25	The utterance of erudition draws its power from the *book of truth* it carries. Stealing this book will cripple the creature in battle, and it makes a valuable piece of treasure.

TACTICS

With its ability to accurately sense current hit points and target its Speak the Word abilities perfectly, the utterance of erudition is an absolute menace during the first few rounds of a fight. It leads with Stun,

disabling enemies who have poor Constitution saving throws. Heal is best used on a powerful ally with a lot of hit points but can also be used to save the utterance in a pinch. It should save Kill until it feels its life is threatened, and it should always try to negotiate, demanding its life and freedom in exchange for not killing a character right then and there. Finally, the utterance has a few spells it can cast as a bonus action. It primarily uses *dimension door* to avoid getting stuck in melee range against dangerous foes and *dispel magic* to deal with irritating ongoing magical effects. *True seeing* is a contingency spell in case of invisible foes or troublesome illusions.

Don't forget to use Superior Linguistics—it's an easy-to-overlook feature that lets the utterance of erudition redirect a spell to a new target. Because this ability requires using a reaction, it can only do so once per round, so choose carefully against parties with multiple spellcasters.

Easier Tactics – Avoid using Kill, and use Heal only to save the utterance. Make more use of its Despair and Discord abilities, even before all its uses of Stun are expended, as these are both quite a bit weaker. Finally, don't give the utterance too many strong allies that will keep it safe to sling spells round after round. If the party can bypass the front line easily, they'll fare much better against the utterance.

Harder Tactics – Pair the utterance with something that can cast illusions for an intense fight. If the utterance comes in with *true seeing* cast, it can target the party through the illusions, dealing damage and debilitating them before its allies charge in. If you really want to make this fight brutal, use Kill on the first round to eliminate one threat right from the start.

UTTERANCE OF ERUDITION

Medium humanoid (any), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Int +10, Wis +9, Cha +7
Skills Arcana +15, Deception +7, Investigation +10, Perception +9
Damage Immunities radiant
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages all with Book of Truth; otherwise, Common, Elvish
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

TRAITS

Book of Truth. The utterance carries with it a book of its research into truespeech. While the utterance is in possession of this book, it has advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws. Additionally, it can speak all languages and knows if it hears a lie. If the utterance loses this book, it can no longer use its Consult the Book or In Defense of Self abilities.

In Defense of Self. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the utterance can cast one of the following spells at will, requiring only verbal components: *dimension door*, *dispel magic* (5th level), *true seeing*. The utterance's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The utterance uses Consult the Book or Speak the Word, then makes two Ray of Truth attacks.

Consult the Book. The utterance chooses a creature it can see within 120 feet. The utterance learns the following information about the target: current hit points, hit point maximum, and saving throw proficiencies.

Ray of Truth. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) radiant damage.

Speak the Word. The utterance targets a creature it can see within 120 feet and magically causes one of the following effects.

- *Despair (At Will).* The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become overwhelmed with despair for 1 minute. During this time the creature can't attack or target any creature with harmful abilities, spells, or other magical effects. The target can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.
- *Discord (At Will).* The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or fall to bickering and arguing with everyone around it for 1 minute. During this time, it is incapable of meaningful communication and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks. The target can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.
- *Heal (1/Short Rest).* The target regains all its hit points. If the target is charmed, frightened, paralyzed, or stunned, the condition ends. If the target is prone, it can immediately take a reaction to stand up.
- *Kill (1/Long Rest).* If the target has 100 hit points or fewer, it dies. Otherwise, this has no effect.
- *Stun (2/Short Rest).* If the target has 150 hit points or fewer, it is stunned. Otherwise, this has no effect. An affected target may attempt a DC 18 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

REACTIONS

Superior Linguistics. When a creature the utterance can hear within 120 feet casts a spell with a range other than touch or self, the utterance can use its reaction to choose the spell's target area or creatures. The utterance must be able to see any targets it wishes to affect in this manner.

PLOT HOOKS

New Teacher. An utterance infiltrates an established wizarding school or bardic college and begins teaching classes as a cover for some greater pursuit. While its lessons are far from inadequate, its subjects invariably shift to the matter of truespeech.

Knowledge Is Power. The party needs information—a foe's truename—and the only source for this knowledge is an utterance of erudition. Winning the favor of the utterance is simple but unpleasant, requiring anything from robbing a library to promising an unspecified favor at a future occasion.

Unhealthy Obsession. Everyone's favorite sage is even more reclusive than usual. She has learned a fragment of truespeech and become obsessed with discovering more. Will the party talk the sage out of her pursuits or encourage her in hopes of gaining a powerful ally?

TREASURE

The pages of an utterance of erudition's *book of truth* are made from paper-thin ivory that has been specially treated to retain magical information. The party can break down the book and sell the raw materials for a total of 2,000 gp, or they can keep it and use it as a wizard's spellbook.

Book of Truth

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a wizard)

The pages of this tome are feather-light; when you flip through them, they always seem to stop exactly where you want them to. If you can attune to this item, you can use it as a spellbook and arcane focus. In addition, you can use an action to target a creature you can see within 120 feet and cause information about the creature to spring into being on a blank page of the book. You learn the target's hit point maximum, current hit points, and saving throw proficiencies. The information fades after 1 minute. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

ECOLOGY

Utterances of erudition seek small schools to teach students (typically bards and wizards, though other classes are not unheard of) about truespeech. They will offer their services to communities unfamiliar with magic, showcasing the wonders of "spells" to an ignorant populace. This benevolence is a cover for more controversial research into truespeech. The many deformations and signs of their obsession are layered in thick robes and intricate masks. Such bizarre eccentricities are not unknown among wizards, so few eyebrows are raised at the sight of a reclusive spellcaster who hides its face. All the while utterances flourish under the veneer of respectability, drawing ever closer to the mastery they so desperately seek. In the event they are exposed, utterances bargain to maintain their privacy, lending its considerable power as fair compensation for silence.

UTTERANCE OF UN-NAMING

Legends speak of syllables of truespeech of such destructive power they can utterly erase others from existence. Called un-naming, this force completely obliterates objects and creatures by deleting their truename from the universe, a fate worse than death. More so than any other utterance, those who learn the art of un-naming lose their old selves. Existence strains to support the utterance of un-naming, beings so suffused with entropic power they barely exist themselves. They are unrecognizable even to those who knew them, their only defining feature a long, black

The Utterance of Un-naming

Nasty. There's no other word for it. To be an utterance of un-naming is to flirt with oblivion, and I don't mean that as a flowery euphemism for death. I've only encountered one in my travels, and that was sufficient to sate my curiosity. I called it "voidspeaker," as I found the ambiguity more palatable than the creature's truename. If you encounter one, do not speak to it, do not engage it in battle, and if you cannot avail yourself of an escape route, ambush the creature and kill it quickly. The element of surprise is your only defense.

It isn't the outfits of voidspeakers that demarcate them, but their very mode of existence. Their minor movements are made via short jumps in time, appearing to the eye as a flickering between two slightly different postures. Their faces are blurred and unrecognizable—even your own mother won't know you once you've taken this dark road. I have observed that they follow patterns, but their behavior is so erratic and difficult to track that determining where these patterns start and end is a herculean effort. If you must face a voidspeaker on the field of battle, you would do well to learn these patterns and exploit them. It may be your only advantage.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Artillery

Favors: Barbarians, Damage (Physical), Rangers, Paladins, Wisdom (High)

Foils: Constitution (Low), Damage (Elemental), Dexterity (Low), Spellcasters

tongue with which to speak the dread words of un-naming. Their forms are otherwise blurred beyond all definition by the destructive power of truespeech, with a chaotic, amnesiac mind to match. Utterances of un-naming speak little—save for their truespeech incantations—and when they do, it comes out in a grim tone with broken grammar.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an utterance of un-naming with a Wisdom (Insight) ability check.

UTTERANCE OF UN-NAMING LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	An utterance of un-naming gets more dangerous the more it knows about you. Its words can damage your truename, which can have deadly results. If one knows your full truename, it's best to do whatever it says.
21	An utterance of un-naming has used truespeech on itself, altering its very being to be one with the fabric of the universe. Such alterations come at a terrible cost to body, mind, and soul, but the power gained is undeniable. An utterance's words cannot be stopped, even by magic, and they can change the nature of the material universe.
25	An utterance of un-naming can even be heard by the deaf, so powerful is the mystical nature of truespeech. If you wish to best one in combat, keep your distance to stay out of range.

TACTICS

An utterance of un-naming is a disdainful, arrogant enemy. Its words can force an enemy to follow suicidal orders, tear a psyche in two, and prevent others from acting. The utterance has two reactions and uses them well. Melee enemies are teleported away with Rebuke, while characters who rely on efficient action economies (like rogues and monks) are afflicted by Censure. While the utterance's Words of Entropy feature is powerful, it must be able to see an effect in order to end it. Considering it has truesight, this makes it able to affect most things, allowing the utterance to dismiss a *wall of fire* or even an *earthquake* effect with ease. However, personal buffs like *foresight* and *mind blank* have no visual cue, and the utterance treats creatures under such effects as extremely dangerous.

Use Subjugate as early as possible to give a character a command that moves it away from the utterance or causes significant harm to itself. Jumping off a cliff, leaping into a *prismatic wall*, or committing suicide by *meteor swarm* are all reasonable uses of this ability. The severity of the command should be based on how tough you want the encounter to be. Remind whiny players that this is not mere magic. This is truespeech, and it does not screw around. The utterance should use Truename Research every turn until it has affected each enemy, then it focuses exclusively on eliminating those threats.

Easier Tactics – Only affect a single character at a time with Subjugate. Any more than that and the party can find themselves completely disabled. Be lenient on the commands and allow players a more liberal interpretation of how their characters follow them. Have the utterance fight in a large open space, allowing the characters the ability to stay out of earshot and truesight range.

Harder Tactics – The utterance should open with Subjugate as quickly as possible and aim to keep the characters within 120 feet of it but never too close. It should use Rebuke to move allies away from each other or into harmful areas, while it uses Censure to stop clutch support effects like Bardic Inspiration and *healing word*. If you are feeling really mean, having the utterance know one of the characters' truenames, a trump card it holds until nearly defeated as a way to barter for its life.

PLOT HOOKS

Blackmail. An utterance of un-naming sends a letter to a character upon which is written the character's truename and a request for a powerful magical text rumored to exist in a lich's library. Should the characters fail to act on the utterance's behalf in a timely manner, the utterance may use the character's truename to devastating effect.

College of Entropy. An utterance of un-naming joins a bardic college as a professor. Known as the College of Entropy[†], this school seeks to learn the truespeech lyrics to a song that can end the multiverse. Though many are doubtful on this development's chances of bringing this apocalypse about, is it a risk any can afford to take?

Lost and Forgotten. An adventurer claiming to have once been a companion of the characters appears and requests entry into their group. The adventurer claims that the traveler's truename was erased by an utterance of un-naming, causing the multiverse to forget this person ever existed. Having acquired a new truename, the adventurer seeks the characters' help in getting vengeance against the utterance. But is this the truth?

TREASURE

The utterance of un-naming keeps many tomes and books on truespeech, which unfortunately have so much incoherent scratches, scribbles, and footnotes that they are impossible to read. Even magical attempts to decipher their works mysteriously fail, which is probably for the best. The one exception to this rule are wizards, who possess the necessary expertise to gain some insight into an utterance's power. Wizards can spend 48 total hours of strenuous activities poring over an utterance of un-naming's library to copy the following spell into their spellbooks, assuming they have the other necessary components to do so.

ECOLOGY

Utterances of un-naming forsake all worldly bonds. If they are in the company of other creatures it is because those creatures are beneath the utterance's notice. It considers all those weaker than it akin to insects

[†] This bardic college and subclass option can be found in the book *Tyrants and Hellions*, by 2CGaming.

to be stomped on if they become inconvenient, but otherwise they are ignored. The one exception to this arrogance is when lore about truespeech is concerned. There is little these creatures will not do to acquire more knowledge on the subject, and they will never try to double cross those who offer an exchange in good faith. Utterances of un-naming cannot be tolerated among civilized societies, but they attract various misanthropes, arcanists, and others who wish nothing but destruction upon the world. Their homes reflect this fatalistic view, with little convenience or thought toward living well. Dungeons, castles, and even barren wastelands are perfect homes for these creatures who prefer to be left alone at all times.

New Spell – Discover Truename

This spell is a class spell for bards and wizards.

Discover Truename

9th-level divination

Casting Time: 48 hours
Range: Infinite
Components: V, S, M (a secret known only to the target of the spell, and a library containing at least one hundred scholarly books on the subject of truespeech)
Duration: Instantaneous

You learn the truename of a creature you are aware of. While you know the creature's truename you have advantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks against the creature. Legendary creatures of CR 21 or higher can attempt a Charisma saving throw, preventing you from learning their truename on a success. Once you have cast this spell, you cannot cast it again until 1 year has passed.

UTTERANCE OF UN-NAMING

Medium humanoid (any), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)
Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +10, Wis +10
Skills Arcana +14, Deception +9, Insight +12, Perception +10
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone
Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 20
Languages Common
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Powerful Words. Spells and magical effects cannot prevent the utterance from speaking. Additionally, its words can always be heard and understood by those within earshot (even deafened creatures).

Reactive. The utterance has two reactions.

Words of Entropy. At the start of each of the utterance's turns it can choose to immediately end a single effect or spell it can see with a duration greater than instantaneous.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The utterance uses Truename Research or Subjugate, then uses Truename Disruption twice against two different targets.

Subjugate. The utterance commands a creature who can hear it to follow a course of activity (limited to one sentence) and force it to make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature must follow the command, taking all actions and spending movement necessary to best fulfill its terms. This effect lasts for 1 minute or until the target fulfills the command, whichever comes first. If an affected target takes damage it can immediately attempt a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

Terminate. The utterance deletes the truename of a creature it can see whose truename it knows. At the end of the target's next turn, it dies and its body disappears into nothingness. The target cannot be restored to life without its truename, or until a new truename is given to it.

Truename Disruption. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 30 (4d10 + 8) psychic damage plus 22 (4d10) slashing damage.

Truename Research. The utterance attempts to discern the truename of a creature it can see within 120 feet by making a Wisdom (Insight) check contested by the target's Charisma (Deception) check. On a success, the utterance learns a fragment of the target's truename. While the utterance knows this fragment, it has advantage on all attacks, ability checks, and saving throws against the target.

Additionally, if the target is incapacitated, the utterance can spend the next hour engaged in strenuous activity to discern the target's full truename.

REACTIONS

Censure. As a reaction when a creature that can hear the utterance within 120 feet takes a reaction or bonus action, it can force that creature instead take no action.

Rebuke. As a reaction when a creature that can hear the utterance moves within 15 feet of it, the utterance can force the creature to succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or take 22 (4d10) psychic damage and be magically teleported to an unoccupied space the utterance can see within 60 feet.

Valkyrie

Shepherds of the honorable dead, the celestial warrior women known as valkyries are as powerful as they are mysterious. It is the dream of every mortal warrior to be born to the afterlife in the arms of a valkyrie, a fate befitting only those who have acted unfailingly with honor and strength. Unconcerned with the affairs of the living, all valkyries are bound to secure the souls of worthy warriors for a prophesized apocalyptic battle. Only then will the legions of souls, transformed into einherjar, be unleashed: a tide of steel and blood containing the greatest fighters throughout history. Should any mortal interfere with the affairs of this sacred charge, they will find themselves tested in combat. Those who prove themselves worthy will be invited to join the eternal host and prepare for the coming apocalypse. Those who fail the trial of valkyries lack the strength and honor to be considered worthy, condemned to a lifetime of inadequacy in the eyes of the world's greatest warriors.

SHIELD MAIDEN

Adorned in thick armor emblazoned with magic runes, the mighty shield maiden is the vanguard of the valkyries. Their armaments are a shining silver, and each effortlessly carries a tower shield of staggering size covered in apocalyptic iconography. Those privileged enough to behold a shield maiden without their armor discover each is unique in appearance, save for the ethereal wings that sprout from their backs. These wings are shadowy for evil shield maidens, a radiant blue for neutral, and shining gold for good. When one can converse with these creatures, they are curt and militaristic, with an unwavering, unceasing commitment to their charge.

TALIEN'S NOTES

When Zau Hek was felled by Amunrahx's claw, I thought our long career adventuring together was finally at an end. Her soul rested peacefully in death, and we made preparations to bury her with honors. Hundreds she had aided gathered at the funeral, to pay homage to the greatest warrior I have known. It was then the angelic figure descended from the skies, a ghostly woman from a mysterious realm, battle ready and imperious in her demeaner. Alighting upon my friend's body, the valkyrie drew forth a drinking horn while speaking words none could hear. With ceremonial grace, the drink was poured down the fallen champion's throat, causing her to leap to her feet as lively as the day we first met. To this day she refused to tell me what the valkyrie said, on top of refusing to reimburse us for the funeral expenses. I must find my own way to call one of these celestials for further research, as I don't think Zau Hek has any intention of dying again.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a shield maiden with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

SHIELD MAIDEN LORE

DC	INFORMATION
13	Celestial warrior women, shield maidens can be easily distinguished from other angels by their ethereal wings and stoic silence. These fearless combatants only appear to do battle and escort the souls of fallen warriors to a glorious afterlife.
19	Shield maidens emit powerful magic that can spare humanoid allies from death, and their armor is enchanted with runes that provide defense against any assault. They can even attune their defenses to specific types of attacks, ensuring longevity on the battlefield. If one of these valkyries has her shield in hand and is in good fighting shape, she will deflect any projectiles with ease.
24	A shield maiden can only adapt to one type of attack at a time, so cunning assailants would do well to diversify their methods of attack. While difficult to bring down, once incapacitated, many of a shield maiden's powers and defenses are rendered ineffective. While rarely alone, a shield maiden must remain close to her humanoid allies to keep them alive.

The Shield Maiden

I can think of few beings I'd rather have fight beside me than the mighty shield maiden. However, trying to enlist one is a trial beyond comprehension. They only speak to the dead, respect only honorable warriors, and are too large to fit comfortably in most buildings. But when it comes to the art of war, these valkyries can fight like no other. I have witnessed firsthand an entire platoon fight through mortal wounds at a shield maiden's side, defying death in search of glory on the battlefield. It is from conflicts such as these that a valkyrie selects her worthy, spiriting their souls away to realms unknown.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Soldier

Favors: Clerics, Disabling, Mobility (High), Monks, Wizards

Foils: Fighters, Range, Rogues, Single-Target, Warlocks

TACTICS

A shield maiden is a masterful soldier, fighting in the front lines with her humanoid allies to overcome almost any obstacle. With no ranged attacks, the valkyrie moves into melee as soon as possible, using her flight to optimally position herself to protect allies who would benefit from her Zeal of the Worthy feature. With a considerable amount of combat experience, the valkyrie often knows which enemies are vulnerable to her Shield Bash, particularly if they are concentrating. Unconscious enemies are easy targets for critical hits with her spear or swarming and butchering by her allies.

Unless caught completely by surprise, the shield maiden always uses its Rune of Warding feature optimally, picking a benefit that will serve her

EINHERJAR TEMPLATE

When a valkyrie deems a mortal soul worthy, it may transform the soul into a powerful warrior spirit called an einherjar. Only humanoids can become einherjar, and only by the power of a valkyrie. A valkyrie wishing to create an einherjar must come into the possession of the mortal's soul within 24 hours of their passing; any longer and their soul will have passed into an afterlife befitting of their mortal deeds. Einherjar have physical forms, having effectively been restored to life by the power of the valkyrie, but they are immortal for as long as they remain honorable in battle.

A humanoid that becomes an einherjar retains its statistics and gains the following traits:

Type. The creature's type remains humanoid.

Challenge. The creatures challenge rating increases by 2.

Battle Hardened. When the creature scores a hit with a weapon attack, it rolls one additional weapon damage die when determining the damage from the hit.

Damage Resistance. The creature is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.

Enduring Soul. An einherjar cannot be restored to life in any way other than via this feature. When it is slain, an einherjar's body vanishes along with any equipment in its possession. It is then restored to life in the realm of the valkyries 1 month after its death, and has its equipment restored to it by a valkyrie in a formal ceremony that honors its death in battle.

Sworn to Service. By becoming an einherjar, the creature agrees to serve as a foot soldier in the coming apocalypse and act honorably in all walks of life. If a creature violates this oath in any way, it is immediately slain and its soul transported to the realm of the valkyries, where it is judged and summarily obliterated, beyond the help of even the gods.





VALKYRIE

best in the battle ahead. An extremely powerful instance of damage from an unexpected source will likely cause her to change to a different rune to compensate for the tactical misjudgment. Remember that the total cover granted by the valkyrie's Tower Shield mastery prevents her from being targeted by ranged attacks unless she is incapacitated, forcing most foes to change tactics or wait for her defenses to be lowered.

Easier Tactics — The valkyrie will choose her Rune of Warding benefit randomly and will only change in dire circumstances. If paired with humanoid allies, the valkyrie will not make efforts to keep them within her Zeal of the Worthy feature, preferring to let them take the extra effort if they wish to benefit from her presence. Additionally, the valkyrie will not use her Shield Bash first when attacking.

Harder Tactics — The valkyrie will fly above the battlefield, keeping her allies within range of her Zeal of the Worthy feature. On her turn, she will use her Rune of Warding feature to protect against the foe most likely to damage her before flying into melee. Her great speed should allow her to hit and run while incurring little risk, while sometimes keeping them threatened by her spear attack. With cover from ranged attacks, only flying heroes or powerful magic have a chance of bringing the valkyrie down.

PLOT HOOKS

Are You Not Entertained? A gladiatorial tournament is being held in a nearby metropolis. First prize is a one-way ticket to the afterlife in the arms of a shield maiden, who has been summoned to referee the matches and watch for dishonorable cheaters.

Death Before Dishonor. An evil shield maiden waits upon the peak of a snowy stricken mountain, guarding a *holy avenger* against those who would claim the blade. Four holy champions serve the maiden in this task, honor bound after failing to overcome her martial might and held at the edge of death by her powers.

New World Order. A paladin has enlisted a shield maiden in a crusade to unite a dozen kingdoms under one banner. Nearly unbeatable due to her celestial ally, the paladin has gone unchallenged as nation after nation falls in line.

SHIELD MAIDEN

Large celestial, any lawful

Armor Class 24 (plate, tower shield)
Hit Points 200 (18d10 +96)
Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	26 (+8)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +14, Wis +10
Skills Athletics +12, Insight +10, Perception +10
Damage Resistances necrotic, radiant
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 20
Languages All, but can only be understood by the dead and other valkyries
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

TRAITS

Holy Armaments. The maiden's weapon attacks are magical, and the maiden cannot be disarmed of her weapons or equipment. When the maiden hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 11 (2d10) radiant or necrotic damage (maiden's choice, included in the attack).

Rune of Warding. The maiden's shield is inscribed with a powerful magical rune. As a bonus action on each of her turns, the maiden can empower the rune to gain one of the following benefits for 1 minute. This effect ends prematurely if the maiden uses this feature again.

- **Rune of Armor.** The maiden takes half damage from weapon attacks.
- **Rune of Magic.** The maiden takes half damage from spells.
- **Rune of Empowerment.** When the maiden attempts a saving throw or ability check, she rolls a d6 and adds the amount rolled to the result.

Tower Shield Mastery. While the maiden is not incapacitated and wielding her shield, she has total cover against ranged attacks.

Zeal of the Worthy. While the shield maiden is not incapacitated, humanoid creatures of her choice within 30 ft. of her cannot be reduced below 1 hit point unless the maiden chooses otherwise.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The maiden makes a spear and shield bash attack.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 6) piercing plus 11 (2d10) radiant or necrotic (her choice).

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) bludgeoning plus 11 (2d10) radiant or necrotic (her choice). If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be knocked unconscious until the start of its next turn.

Last Stand (1/day). The maiden pours a horn of mead down the throat of a flesh and blood creature that was slain within the last minute and attempts to restore it to life. If the creature's soul is willing, it is restored to life at its maximum hit points and regains all its features as though it had finished a long rest. After 24 hours, the creature dies and cannot be restored to life for a period of 10 years.

Star Shot. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, range 500 ft., one target. *Hit:* 43 (6d10 +10) piercing damage.

TREASURE

A valkyrie's body and equipment typically vanish when the creature is slain. However, if a shield maiden is defeated by an enemy it greatly respects, it may choose to leave behind its mighty tower shield, which is detailed below.

Skuld of the Valkyries

Armor (shield), legendary (requires attunement)

While holding the shield, you have a +2 bonus to AC. This bonus is in addition to the shield's normal bonus to AC. Additionally, while you are not incapacitated and holding the shield you have total cover against ranged attacks.

ECOLOGY

None who have been to the valkyrie's home plane have divulged its true name, nor the nature of existence there. The only experience most have with these creatures is when the valkyries venture forth in search of potential warriors to join their host. Shield maidens are the most common amongst those sent forth but are still incredibly rare. A valkyrie cannot return home until she has found a willing soul and will frequent the sites of great conflicts of martial skill in search of potential candidates. Living warriors who show potential can cause quite a conundrum for a valkyrie, who will only wait so long for the champion to fall. More than a few heroes have been slain by an inpatient valkyrie or conveniently died in glorious battle not long after one appeared. This makes shield maidens icons of death amongst most cultures, feared and revered wherever they roam.

The Wyrd Seer

One would think the best way to prevent the apocalypse would be to share everything you know about it with the world. But apparently, these so called wyrd seers think it best to keep such pertinent information to themselves. Not being dead, I can't ask them about this particular course of action, nor do I think they would explain themselves even if I could. Archmagister King once spoke of his experience with a wyrd seer, and it was...disturbing to say the least. Anything that can make that blustering wizard speak with humility must be a true terror indeed.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Artillery
Favors: Clerics, Druids, Range, Spells (Healing), Warlocks
Foils: Barbarians, Fighters, Melee, Rogues, Single-Target

WYRD SEER

Spectral celestials with the ability to see a creature's fate, wyrd seers are the apocalyptic prophets of the valkyries. Eyes blind to the present, these celestials have turned their gaze toward the future and witnessed the end of all things. It is this fate the wyrd seers seek to change, charging the other valkyries with recruiting specific heroes with traits and abilities of significance known only to the seers. On the rare occasion one of these creatures chooses to act in the present, its mastery over destiny and ghostlike powers make it a formidable foe that turns a creature's own strength upon itself.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a wyrd seer with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

WYRD SEER LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	Ghostly celestials that know the fate of the mortal realms, wyrd seers are an extreme rarity in the world, often summoned to consult on matters of destiny and the future. Those unfortunate enough to battle a wyrd seer speak of powerful magic and deadly psychic influence.
20	Wyrd seers emit a powerful aura that psychically ravages any who damage the celestial. The magic of wyrd seer allows it to smite those who would dare challenge its authority, and its touch can drain the life of other beings to restore the valkyrie's essence.
25	Wyrd seers cannot be easily hindered due to their incorporeal nature, but can still be stunned or knocked unconscious. Additionally, a seer's retributive properties are not unlimited, and cunning heroes can avoid its psychic counterattack by attacking from long range.

TACTICS

A wyrd seer fears little from combat, for it knows that any damage it receives will be dealt to its attacker in turn. With its magic, the seer unleashes powerful *flame strike* and *harm* spells to devastate already wounded enemies. The seer prefers targets at low hit points, particularly if made so by its Trial of the Valkyries feature. Note that several of the seer's spells, including *divine word, blinding smite,* and *misty step* are cast as bonus actions, allowing it to use its Soul Strike on the same turn. Because the seer expects to take a lot of damage, it tends to use Soul Strike whenever below half of its maximum hit points. Use Twist of Fate defensively unless the wyrd seer is fighting with allies, in which case use it to support their endeavors and increase the potency of their abilities.

Easier Tactics – Engage the seer in an area where the party can out-range its Trial of the Valkyries feature. The celestial neither uses its Incorporeal Movement to avoid attacks by hiding inside solid objects, nor its Soul Strike attack unless it is very desperate.

Harder Tactics – The seer can use its Incorporeal Movement to hide within solid objects when injured and should never fight in an area where its Trial

of the Valkyries feature will often be out of range. The seer uses *divine word* as soon as it knows it can cripple or kill low health targets, using its Soul Strike immediately before doing so to ensure maximum carnage.

PLOT HOOKS

Dark Prophecy. A wyrd seer appears before the party and indicates a member will eventually help bring about the apocalypse. While it cannot speak, the seer constantly attempts to communicate that the party to hand the member over into her custody. Unless a meaningful dialogue can be established, the situation will soon come to blows.

Forcing The Hand Of Fate. A lich and a wyrd seer have formed an unlikely alliance; the lich provides the seer with worthy mortals she requires, while the seer helps the lich intercept threats to its phylactery. Several famous heroes have been "acquired" by the valkyrie, with few willing to take on the villainous pair.

Lady of Light. When a beloved warrior queen passes away peacefully from old age, a choir of valkyries appear at her funeral. The celestials transform the queen's spirit into a wyrd seer, who they allow to remain as an immortal advisor and prophet to the kingdom.

TREASURE

A wyrd seer's body and clothing are incorporeal and vanish when slain. However, a select few wyrd seers are allowed to carry an *orb of fate* when they venture from their home for long periods of time. These magical items contain the mystical waters of the Fountain of Orlog, from which the wyrd seers can divine the future.

Orb of Fate

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

While holding the orb, you have advantage on attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and attacks against you have disadvantage.

Curse. The orb is cursed. Being attuned to the orb curses you until you remain unattuned to it for a period of 1 month. When you take a long rest, you are visited by apocalyptic visions of the future, whose details, meaning and significance can only be interpreted by a wyrd seer. When you finish the rest, you must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or gain no benefit from the rest as the visions overpower your body and mind.

ECOLOGY

When on their home plane, wyrd seers can always be found at the Fountain of Orlog, caressing its icy waters for visions of the future. The valkyrie are loath to send wyrd seers into the world but may do so if their prophetic powers and tremendous insight are required to better prepare for the apocalypse. Wyrd seers are cold and distant, even for a valkyrie, and rarely cooperate with mortals unless absolutely necessary. When traveling other planes wyrd seers keep a low profile but seek out events of great significance to both the present and future. It is not unheard of to come across a wyrd seer in the most unassuming of places; villages, isolated wildernesses, or even deep underground. Such seers are typically waiting for some catastrophic event to transpire, a warning nearby locals would do well to heed. Wyrd seers are almost never wrong about such things.

WYRD SEER

Large celestial, any lawful

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 218 (23d10 +99)
Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	27 (+8)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Int +12, Wis +14
Skills History +12, Nature +12, Insight +20, Perception +14
Damage Resistances necrotic, radiant
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages All, but can only be understood by the dead or other valkyries
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

TRAITS

Incorporeal Movement. The seer 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.

Innate Spellcasting. The seer's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (Spell save DC 22, +14 to hit with spell attacks. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *blinding smite, command, misty step, slow*
2/day each: *flame strike, harm*
1/day each: *divine word, plane shift*

Last Stand (1/day). The seer pours a horn of mead down the throat of a flesh and blood creature that was slain within the last minute and attempts to restore it to life. If the creature's soul is willing, it is restored to life at its maximum hit points and regains all its features as though it had finished a long rest. After 24 hours, the creature dies and cannot be restored to life for a period of 10 years.

Trial of the Valkyries. The seer emits an aura of psychic energy in a 60 ft. radius centered on it. When an enemy creature in the area deals damage to the seer, it takes psychic damage equal to the damage dealt. If this damage reduces a creature to zero hit points, it cannot willingly harm the seer again for the rest of its life.

ACTIONS

Soul Strike. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 60 ft., one living creature. *Hit:* 35 (6d8+8) radiant or necrotic damage, and the seer regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.

REACTIONS

Twist of Fate. When a creature within 60 ft. of the seer attempts an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check, the seer instead chooses whether the creature succeeds or fails, regardless of the result.

BRYNHILDR WAR QUEEN

Heroic champions of the valkyries, the mighty brynhildr war queens are among the finest warriors found in the multiverse. Masters of martial combat with an unrivaled sense of honor, these celestials fight when the fate of world hangs in the balance. Their muscular forms are adorned in plate armor fashioned from a mysterious blue metal, inscribed with white runes that speak of its wearer's deeds and accomplishments. The weapons of each war queen are unique, each a work of art in its own right. To behold these creatures in their full battle regalia is to witness a living legend, her golden wings blazing like a second sun.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a war queen with an Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

BRYNHILDR WAR QUEEN LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	When not engaging in outright warfare, a war queen can transport her opponents to a personal demiplane and slaughter them there. This presumably grants the valkyrie a home turf advantage, but none have returned to confirm this theory.
22	A war queen's weapons are magically empowered, and strike with incredible force. Her defenses are equally formidable, shrugging off feeble attacks with little effort. Even the most powerful spells can be ended by a war queens touch, whose runic armor resists all forms of magic.
27	Some magic can prevent a war queen from shifting to her demilplane, keeping any tactical advantage held by those she is battling. Single, heavy blows are devastating to these creatures; setting up an optimal attack being far more productive than a relentless assault.

TACTICS

Striking with overwhelming force, a war queen can lay low any adventuring party who fails to take them seriously. Unless she has a very good reason not to, use her Duel of the Fates feature as soon as possible to completely disorient the party and purge any helpful magic. From there, the war queen should move systematically between foes, downing vulnerable martial characters first and striking spellcasters with her Wailing Longbow to prevent the use of magic. Use Shield Bash on druids to force them out of Wildshape, paladins to end their powerful auras, and spellcasters to disrupt concentration, before following up with deadly attacks.

Easier Tactics – The war queen will treat the battle more like a test of skill than a mortal conflict. She will engage all opponents evenly to test their mettle, rarely staying to finish them off before moving to the next target. She will avoid using her flight to stay out of reach, preferring to enjoy the thrills of melee combat.

Harder Tactics – The war queen will fight on the PC's terms first, holding her Duel of the Fates feature until defeat is certain or the PCs burn through a considerable amount of resources. Once she arrives on her demiplane fully healed, the war queen will have full knowledge of the PCs attacks and strategies. With this knowledge she will push every advantage, assaulting her greatest threats with overwhelming power before mopping up the survivors.

PLOT HOOKS

Battle Royale. The PCs are drawn by a strange compulsion to a snowy mountaintop, where a war queen awaits them. When they arrive, she claims that if they can defeat her, the rewards will be beyond their wildest dreams. This is a lose-lose situation for the PCs; no matter the outcome, the valkyrie will have her champions.

Lost and Found. An embarrassed war queen is searching for her axe, bow, and shield, which she "misplaced" at an epic harvest festival she visited last year. For their safe return, the queen will teach some powerful martial techniques known only to the valkyries.

Grudge Match. Two war queens (one evil, one good) have had a rivalry for centuries, and are looking to settle the matter once and for all. Each is looking for champions to fight alongside them. While they cannot offer any rewards for this service, the reputation gained from fighting alongside a war queen is an honor many would die for.

The Brynhildr War Queen

The valkyries known as war queens are aptly named. Their kingdom is not the plane they hail from, nor are its subjects its inhabitants. The field is war is theirs to rule with their prodigious strategic minds and deadly skills. Sister Solaria once told me that it was a war queen that inspired her to take up the mantle of paladin. I must say, she has done an admirable job thus far, but has a long way to go if she ever wishes to hold a candle to these deadly celestials. Nobody tell her I said that.

– Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Elite

Favors: Attack Bonus (High), Barbarians, Damage (Physical), Paladins, Rogues

Foils: Monks, Specific Spells (plane shift), Spells (Damaging), Warlocks, Wizards

TREASURE

When a war queen requires overwhelming power at her disposal, she may use a sleipnirian pegasus as a mount. These mighty steeds are tremendously powerful and makes for an ideal mount; a worthy steed for such a powerful being.

ECOLOGY

As generals of the einherjar hosts, war queens spend most of their existence practicing for battle and feasting to recover their strength between training sessions. When a matter is significant enough to demand their explicit attention, war queens refuse to be anywhere but the front lines. These valkyries embody honorable combat, and lead by example whenever they take to the battlefield. Each war queen possesses a keen intuition about the stakes of a given conflict and will seek out such events to ensure the proper force achieves victory. If a war queen is fortunate enough to encounter a warrior or group of warriors on her travels, she may transport them to her private battleground for a "true test of skill" absent any distractions or interference. Rarely is this "offer" consensual and win or lose most participants are offered the opportunity to join the einherjar in eternal glory.

USING VALKYRIE IN A FANTASY SETTING

Valkyries are fantastical figures from Norse mythology, powerful warrior women that make for awesome celestial forces in a fantasy setting. Their popularity has led to a presence in many campaign settings, so feel free to alter the lore and information presented here to be more in line with any valkyries that are present in your game. It is likely the versions presented here are extremely powerful when compared to other iterations, in which case we suggest making even the lowest amongst this group high ranking figures among the valkyries.

Additionally, remember that valkyries are rooted in a very real cultural tradition, and are considered sacred figures in Norse mythology. While there are many legends portraying the valkyries in a diverse role, be mindful that in most of these stories they are figures of great reverence and agency. Consider the merits of portraying a valkyrie in a way that honors this cultural history and think carefully about using valkyries in a way that would deviate from this portrayal.

For examples of valkyries in literature from which you can draw inspiration, consult the many versions of the *Völsunga saga*, where the story centers around the valkyrie character of Brunhilda. J.R.R. Tolkein's *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* is an excellent example of this legend told through poetry, which can aid you in capturing the true spirit of the valkyries in your game.

SLEIPNIRIAN PEGASUS

Huge celestial, any lawful

Armor Class 26 (mithril barding)
Hit Points 207 (18d12 + 90)
Speed 80 ft., fly 160 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	24 (+7)	21 (+5)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +12, Wis +8, Cha +7
Skills Perception +13
Damage Resistances necrotic, radiant
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages All, but cannot speak
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

TRAITS

Deadly Charger (1/turn). When the pegasus spends movement and moves in a straight line for at least 60 ft. and either it or its rider makes a melee attack immediately at the end of that movement, the attack deals an additional 3 (1d6) damage for every 10 ft. traveled in the line.

Loyalty. The pegasus cannot be compelled to act in a manner that goes against the interests of its rider. Additionally, when the pegasus rolls initiative and is being ridden, it can choose to have its turn occur simultaneously to its rider.

Soulbound. While ridden, the pegasus cannot be slain.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The pegasus makes two hooves attacks.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., four different targets. *Hit:* 21 (4d6+7) bludgeoning damage.

Planeshift (1/Short Rest). The pegasus casts the spell *planeshift*. Willing creatures wishing to journey with the pegasus must be riding it, instead of linking hands.

BRYNHILDR WAR QUEEN

Large celestial, any lawful

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)
Hit Points 304 (29d10 +145)
Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	19 (+4)	25 (+7)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +13, Int +13, Wis +14, Cha +8
Skills Athletics +16, Acrobatics +20, Insight +11, Perception +14, Intimidation +15
Damage Resistances necrotic, radiant
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages All, but can only be understood by the dead or other valkyries
Challenge 24 (22,000 XP)

TRAITS

Adamantine Skin. If the war queen takes 15 or less damage from an attack, it instead takes no damage.

Duel of the Fates. When the queen rolls initiative, it can choose to be magically transported to an unoccupied space on its personal battleground; a mystical demiplane of war and battle. When it does so, each creature within 300 ft. of the war queen can choose to accompany it, appearing in an unoccupied space of the war queen's choice on the demiplane.

This demiplane is an open battlefield approximately 300 ft. in diameter, with no cover or terrain features to speak of. The war queen cannot leave the demiplane while an enemy creature on the demiplane lives, neither can enemy creatures leave the demiplane while the war queen lives. When a creature first arrives on the demiplane, all spells and magical effects currently affecting it end, and it is restored to its hit point maximum.

If an effect would prevent this feature from occurring when the war queen rolls initiative, it instead immediately occurs at the start of each of the war queen's turns, until it takes effect, or the war queen is slain.

Holy Armaments. The war queen's weapon attacks are magical, and the queen cannot be disarmed of her weapons or equipment. When the war queen hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 22 (4d10) radiant or necrotic damage (queen's choice, included in the attack).

Last Stand (1/day). The war queen pours a horn of mead down the throat of a flesh and blood creature that was slain within the last minute and attempts to restore it to life. If the creature's soul is willing, it is restored to life at its maximum hit points and regains all its features as though it had finished a long rest. After 24 hours, the creature dies and cannot be restored to life for a period of 10 years.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When the war queen fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The war queen makes four attacks, only one of which may be a shield bash, or two attacks and one other action.

Dispelling Touch. The war queen ends a single magical effect of 8th level or lower within reach or currently affecting it.

Battle Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (1d12+8) slashing plus 22 (4d10) radiant or necrotic.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d6+8) bludgeoning plus 22 (4d10) radiant or necrotic. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or be knocked unconscious until the start of its next turn.

Wailing Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 150 ft./600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d10+6) piercing damage plus 22 (4d10) radiant or necrotic. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw or be unable to make any sound other than scream ferocious battle cries for 1 minute. A creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The war queen 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. The war queen regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Dash. The war queen moves up to her speed. If she is mounted, her mount may instead move up to its speed.

Defensive Formation. Until the end of its next turn while the war queen is not incapacitated, her AC is 24.

Strike. The war queen makes an attack.

Vermindrakes

Foul creatures designed to bring ruin to all things artificial, vermindrakes are a bizarre combination of vermin and dragon. Such a profane hybrid does not occur naturally, and the vermindrakes were twisted into shape by an evil druid who sought to grant nature greater weapons against civilized people. No one is quite sure whether the druid intended to create creatures of such terrifying ferocity and power, but that has undoubtably been the result. Vermindrakes are apex predators that dominate their environment, furiously annihilating anything artificial or humanoid that comes into their territory. Having long outlived their creator, vermindrakes are now a scourge on the world, hated by all sentient creatures but far too powerful and prolific to effectively exterminate.

DRAKOPTERA

The drakoptera, a winged terror of unparalleled ferocity, combines the durability and agility of a small dragon with the unrelenting rage of an angry wasp. As such, they resemble oversized wasps with draconic features, their bodies a twisted mess of claws, scales, chitin, and mandibles.

The Drakoptera

"Mean as a wasp" is the expression of choice when discussing the aggressive drakoptera. Mercifully small (compared to a dragon), these monstrosities emit a frightful droning when in flight, audible at a great distance. When a drakoptera sees a creature larger than a small dog, it becomes filled with all-consuming rage. This fury drives these vermindrakes into a suicidal frenzy. I've watched one dive into a burning building in pursuit of a panicked goblin, ending its life in a blaze of glory. According to Masako, "that was a good death," but that's more or less what you'd expect from a barbarian of her ilk. My attempts to magically sedate these creatures has proven difficult, and I have yet to examine a live one in a state other than psychotic anger.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Clerics, Range, Rangers, Rogues, Support

Foils: Barbarians, Bards, Hit Points (Low), Melee, Sorcerers

The creatures exist in a state of perpetual rage, driven to slaughter any creature they come across with suicidal determination. The exception to this rule are other vermindrakes, further corroborating the theory that the creatures were artificially crafted. Coexistence with drakopteras is impossible; once they have killed everything within their territory, they migrate to a new locale and begin their destructive rampage anew.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a drakoptera with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

DRAKOPTERA LORE

DC	INFORMATION
13	If you are in a drakoptera's territory, leave. The monstrosities cannot be reasoned with and are rarely alone. Expect to be attacked on sight. Drakoptera can carry creatures and objects many times their own weight and are fond of dropping enemies from great heights.
19	Drakopteras are swift and possess surprising strength. They fixate on a single target in a suicidal rage until their prey is slain, attacking with no sense of self-preservation. Powerful magic is needed to enchant a drakoptera, which can shrug off most spells with ease.
24	The venom of a drakoptera is exceptionally potent, able to paralyze robust creatures for hours and used to preserve fresh meat for its larval young. In order to deliver this poison, the drakoptera must first have a firm grasp of its prey. Stay out of its clutches if you wish to avoid this fate.

TALIEN'S NOTES

I detest vermin, especially chitinous ones. When I learned of the existence of vermindrakes, for the first time I prayed that this discovery was one of the many exaggerations I have encountered on my journey. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and I can say without a shadow of a doubt that these creatures are the most detestable, revolting, and aggressive monstrosities I have ever encountered. Each of the four breeds I have discovered is uniquely dangerous, displaying strengths and traits of different vermin in brutal synergy with the might of a dragon. Signs of intelligent design are everywhere on these creatures. Thankfully, the deranged—or astoundingly foolish—mind that created the vermindrakes has been lost to time.



TACTICS

Because of their rage, drakopteras lack any sense of subtlety. Once they have fixated on a target, almost nothing can pry the vermindrakes away except their own death. When given the choice, drakopteras prefer to stay airborne, pulling their prey away from allies and into the sky. While they lack any sense of self-preservation, they fight with impressive cunning. Drakoptera avoid taking damage when possible and can understand the basics of spells, identifying casters based on magical effects. These drakes rarely operate alone, but they only associate with other drakoptera. These creatures are not good teammates, often getting in the way of each other in pursuit of their targets. The only things drakoptera will not kill are those they have poisoned with their Inject Venom feature, which are carried back to the hive as food for grubs.

Easier Tactics – The drakoptera takes the most expedient route toward the target of its rage, passing through any harmful barriers with psychotic fury. It stays close to the ground, using its flight only to pursue targets or get around solid obstacles. The vermindrake should only use its Inject Venom action on targets that are already unconscious.

Harder Tactics – The drakoptera attempts to grapple its target as soon as possible and then uses its Inject Venom action to paralyze it. If unsuccessful in this attempt, the drakoptera pulls its target into the sky, biting and stinging as often as possible. Additionally, it avoids obviously dangerous enemies and provoking attacks of opportunity in pursuit of its target, so long as doing so proves to not be too inconvenient.

PLOT HOOKS

Farmer's Bane. A small hive of drakopteras take up residence in a large barn and begin slaughtering the nearby livestock. With half his herd dispatched within a week, the farmer is desperate to have the horrors exterminated before they can do any more damage.

Lord of the Arena. A drakoptera is the reigning champion in a bestial pit-fighting ring. During its most recent championship match, the vermindrake slaughtered many of the spectators. Now the derelict building where the illegal matches were held buzzes with the fury of the drakoptera locked inside, with piles of money abandoned in the panic serving as an enticing reward for any brave enough to face the beast.

Caution: Area Under Construction. Deep in the forest, a drakoptera is building a massive hive large enough to hold dozens of its kin. This unusual behavior cannot be explained, but even the potential for a hive full of vermindrakes is one the nearby town cannot abide.


Wasp Vermindrake
No breath weapon?
Poison? likely...
Impressive Carapace


AMBROSE III

TREASURE

Assuming its body is intact, a drakoptera's venom can be extracted and preserved for later use. Harvesting the venom takes 1 hour of strenuous activity and requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check, which provides enough for ten doses.

Drakoptera Venom (Injury)

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. While paralyzed in this manner, a creature takes 13 (3d8) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. An affected creature can attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on saving throws against this poison.

ECOLOGY

Drakopteras can thrive in almost any environment where meat is readily available. The creatures have a natural aversion to large bodies of water and extreme cold but will journey into such locales in pursuit of a meal. The monstrosities typically travel in groups of two to five, though most environments cannot support more than a few at a time. Drakopteras build their hives in caves or high in the trees, which are typically massive structures formed from a mixture of paper, bones, and local flora. These creatures lack the sense of coordination and synergy found in most collaborative insects and immediately unbalance whatever ecosystem they occupy. Finding a drakoptera or its hive is therefore quite easy—simply follow the trail of destruction and the buzz of giant wings.

DRAKUTO

As durable as adamantine and as vicious as a rabid grizzly bear, drakutos are an unholy combination of beetle and dragon with a hatred for artificial structures that defies all reason. Designed to level entire cities, a drakuto is so durable most communities are better off fleeing their homes rather than facing it in battle. The creature's incredible defenses are made all the more formidable by its relentless demeanor and powerful attacks, able to cleave through steel as though it were paper. Resembling giant beetles with dragon-like limbs and faces, drakutos burrow, fly, and crawl eagerly toward any structure they find until nothing but rubble remains.

DRAKOPTERA

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 144 (17d10 + 51)
Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)	6 (-2)	17 (+3)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +11, Con +9
Skills Athletics +7, Perception +13, Survival +8
Damage Vulnerabilities lightning
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, stunned, unconscious
Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 23
Languages —
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

TRAITS

Aerial Combatant. As a bonus action while the drakoptera is flying, it can take the Dash or Dodge action.

Single-Minded Fury. When the drakoptera rolls for initiative, it chooses a single enemy creature it is aware of and is filled with rage toward that creature, granting it the following benefits.

- The drakoptera won't willingly attack any creature other than the chosen enemy.
- The drakoptera has advantage on attack rolls against the chosen enemy.

This effect ends if the drakoptera has not attacked the target for at least 1 minute or its target is slain. When the target is slain the drakoptera can immediately target another enemy creature it is aware of with this feature.

Spell Suppression. At the start of each of its turns, the drakoptera can choose to suppress a single spell or magical effect of 5th level or lower currently affecting it, becoming immune to its effects. This benefit lasts until the end of the drakoptera's turn, at which point the spell or magical effect resumes (when applicable).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The drakoptera makes two attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) slashing damage, and if the target is a creature, the drakoptera may grapple it (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the drakoptera cannot bite another target.

Inject Venom (Recharge 6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one grappled target. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 hour. While paralyzed in this manner, a creature with 1 or more hit points takes 13 (3d8) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns, and if reduced to 0 hit points by this damage immediately stabilizes. A paralyzed creature can attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns to end the effect. A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on all saving throws against these effects.

Sting. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft./range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d12 + 6) piercing damage and 13 (2d12) poison damage.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a drakuto with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

DRAKUTO LORE

DC	INFORMATION
14	Drakutos are not as slow as they appear. Their armor can shrug off even the deadliest attacks, and once they have you in their grasp their mandibles are nearly impossible to escape.
19	While slow, a drakuto makes up for its lack of speed with near-impenetrable armor and the ability to burrow and fly. An advancing drakuto cannot be stopped by even the strongest of barbarians.
24	A drakuto can suppress the effects of spells and typically does so when it is being prevented from moving or attacking. Only the most powerful of spells can overcome this ability. Drakutos hate buildings to an almost hilarious degree. The beetle-dragons revel in smashing them to bits and can be easily lured out into the open by the most makeshift of structures.

TACTICS

Akin to living tanks, drakutos attack anything that prevents them from enjoying their favorite pastime—destroying buildings—or anything that attacks them first. Once provoked, the vermindrakes inflict massive collateral damage by charging about the battlefield, preferably with a foe crushed between their pincers. If there are no buildings nearby, a drakuto disengages by burrowing away from threats that prove too evasive. Once it has downed a foe, the drakuto has little interest in finishing it off, seeming to have no understanding of the concept of death. A drakuto has no small amount of cunning and can easily tell which of its enemies are strongest or resistant to its attacks.

Easier Tactics – The drakuto focuses on grappling and crushing a single target, smashing it into unconsciousness before charging toward a new enemy. Once all enemies on the ground have been eliminated, it takes to the air in pursuit of flying enemies or burrows into the ground for safety. If the vermindrake has a choice to attack a building or kill a downed enemy, it always chooses the former.

Harder Tactics – The drakuto immediately charges as many enemies as possible. Creatures stunned by the charge are then immediately pincered and crushed. The vermindrake burrows underground with creatures it is grappling before knocking them unconscious, leaving them buried alive and inaccessible to their allies. The drakuto saves its Spell Suppression for when it's disabled by magic, knowing it can afford to take quite a bit of damage before being in mortal danger.

PLOT HOOKS

Unscheduled Demolition. A drakuto has been steadily smashing its way through the wall of a well-defended city. The defenders have had no luck in repelling the beast, which is almost through the outer wall. The bounty on its head is substantial, particularly if any would-be hunters can prevent further collateral damage.

Biohazard. A wizard's tower gets knocked over by a drakuto, and the subsequent magical explosion contaminates the area for miles around with deadly arcane radiation. The contaminated drakuto is now moving toward a large settlement, spreading the pollution to everything that crosses its path.

Beetle Rodeo. A tribe of orcs have captured a trio of drakutos, using them as living siege engines. If the vermindrakes can be unleashed in the orc camp before they can be deployed, the ensuing chaos will cripple the mighty warband.

The Drakuto

The humble beetle is a harmless, endearing insect. Only an evil heart would pervert such an innocent nature by creating the drakuto. These vermindrakes have an instinctual hatred for all things artificial. If given the choice between saving its own life and smashing one more building, it will always choose the latter. The innocent and weak should stay out of a drakuto's path. Unless you are in its territory or get in its way, the most you stand to lose is your home or place of business. Unfortunately, larger communities cannot make this concession, in which case don't expect walls or gates to hold back an angry drakuto.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Bards, Charisma (High), Dexterity (High), Druids, Intelligence (High), Wizards

Foils: Attacks, Fighters, Mobility (Low), Rogues, Warlocks

TREASURE

Assuming its body is intact, the chitin of a drakuto can be harvested and used to create extraordinary (if grotesque) armor. A single drakuto produces enough quality chitin for two sets of medium armor or a single set of heavy armor. Creating this armor requires 1 week of strenuous activity and a successful DC 18 leatherworker's tools ability check each day during that week. A check that fails by 5 or more spoils the chitin, making it unsuitable for armor.

Drakuto Chitin Armor

Wondrous item, very rare

This suit of armor is fashioned from the chitin of a mighty beetle-like vermindrake, the drakuto. The armor is more flexible and lighter than metal, reducing the armor's weight by half and the Strength requirement (if any) by 2. Additionally, the armor's armor class increases the maximum Dexterity bonus a wearer can add to its AC by 2.

ECOLOGY

While not as aggressive as their wasp-like cousins, drakutos nonetheless have a significant impact on their environment. Preferring warm locales with loose soil through which to burrow, they have a ravenous appetite for detritus and flora and can consume their weight in matter each day. These vermindrakes steadily patrol their territory searching for any artificial structures to smash. While they have no interest in killing other creatures, they do not go out of their way to avoid conflict, shoving them aside with impunity. This makes any cohabitation with a drakuto unpleasant, rarely worth the protection such a creature provides. Thankfully, these drakes are loners by nature and never leave their habitats unless they have no other choice.

ADRAKNID

An absolute nightmare for those who fear spiders and dragons, an adraknid is a vermindrake of deadly stealth and horrifying strength. An ambush predator at the top of any food chain, an adraknid resembles a

The Adraknid

NOPE! NOT WORTH IT ...Fine, I will speak to the terror that is the adraknid, though I'd much rather not. My experience with this horror of horrors was mercifully brief. Hearing tales of missing adventurers, I tracked the monstrosity to its lair deep within the Gloom Wood. Its lair was monstrous, with countless cocoons suspended from webs as thick as ropes, holding many struggling to escape their fates. My courage failed me and I dared go no closer, feeling the gaze of the monster upon me. While the fate of those heroes saddens me, I would never ask another to venture into that den of horrors for any reason.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Lurker

Favors: Druids, Monks, Perception (High), Teleportation, Wizards

Foils: Bards, Mobility (Low), Paladins, Single-Target, Warlocks

DRAKUTO

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 241 (21d12 + 105)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	8 (-1)	21 (+5)	7 (-2)	18 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +10, Wis +9
Skills Athletics +17, Perception +9, Survival +9
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages —
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Armor Plating. The drakuto cannot be critically hit. Additionally, while the drakuto is benefiting from the Dodge action it gains a +5 bonus to its AC.

Crushing Grip. On each of its turns, the drakuto may take a bonus action to deal 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage to anything it is grappling.

Spell Suppression. At the start of each of its turns, the drakuto can choose to suppress a single spell or magical effect of 6th level or lower currently affecting it, becoming immune to its effects. This benefit lasts until the end of the drakuto's turn, at which point the spell or magical effect resumes (when applicable).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The drakuto uses Charge and makes one attack, or makes two attacks.

Charge. The drakuto moves up to double its speed in a straight line. Creatures in its path must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or be trampled by the drakuto. A successful saving throw moves a creature to the nearest unoccupied space within 10 feet out of the drakuto's path. On a failure (or if there are no nearby unoccupied spaces available), a creature takes 25 (4d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone.

Headbutt. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of its next turn. Objects and structures take quadruple damage from this attack.

Pincer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d10 + 7) piercing damage, and if the target is a creature, the drakuto may grapple it (escape DC 20). Until this grapple ends, the drakuto cannot use Pincer on another target.

REACTIONS

Indomitable. If the drakuto is on the ground and is pushed or pulled, it may take a reaction to prevent that movement.

spider of unacceptable size with a draconic body, hybrid legs, and a face that mixes the worst parts of both. The monstrosity can change the color of its scaled, hairy body to blend in with its surroundings in an instant and can fashion webs as tough as steel. Adraknids are extremely tough and shockingly fast, moving across their webs effortlessly despite their size and striking with brutal precision. With a taste for humanoids and considerable intelligence (for a vermindrake), an adraknid has been the end of many a foolish adventurer who mistook it for a mere giant spider.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an adraknid with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

ADRAKNID LORE

DC	INFORMATION
16	Adraknids are like giant spiders, but worse. They can cocoon their prey in moments, and only the strongest can escape their webs. They hate humanoids more than anything else and predate mercilessly upon them.
20	While tremendous in size, adraknids can camouflage their bodies effortlessly and are known for their surprise attacks. They build elaborate webs that could put the most industrious spider to shame, and can even shoot their hair like darts.
24	Adraknids are far more intelligent than they appear and are resistant to most magic. Their lairs are filled with webs designed to confuse and separate intruders, and they can detect any creature caught in them.

TACTICS

Adraknids are deadly adversaries, effortlessly combining terrain, stealth, and raw physical power to best almost any foe. These vermindrakes are masters of concealment and go to great lengths to fill their lairs with hiding spots and cover. An adraknid almost never fights without webbing up the battlefield considerably beforehand. They are intelligent enough to set such traps well in advance and typically have several fallback locations should the battle go south. These monstrosities are never caught in the open and are rarely seen unless they want to be. Anything the vermindrakes suspect is capable of minimizing these advantages is eliminated or avoided at all cost.

Easier Tactics – The battlefield is underdeveloped, lacking significant web formations and keeping the adraknid low to the ground. Once it has cocooned a target, the adraknid leaves it where it lies, assured that its prey will remain entrapped. The creature still targets those it can cocoon most easily but avoids using hit-and-run tactics in favor of overwhelming aggression.

Harder Tactics – The adraknid always hides behind layers of web and cover, only daring to venture forth when a creature touches one of its threads. Once it has chosen its target, the adraknid attacks with surprise and cocoons its first victim. It then picks up the cocoons and moves them to out-of-reach locations, biting those inside for brutal damage. The adraknid targets the physically weakest enemies first, using its webs to trip up burly (often slower) characters who attempt to free their friends.

PLOT HOOKS

City of Webs. A town awakens to a giant adraknid web woven over their entire town in the night. Any who attempt to leave their homes meet a grisly fate, as the adraknid can detect any movement anywhere in the village. Unless someone does something soon, the inhabitants will meet a gruesome end through starvation...or worse.

Queen of Eyes. A dark elf war queen manages to enslave an adraknid and rides it as a mount. Leading a mighty host to the surface, this "Queen of Eyes" cannot be bested on the battlefield, as her sinister mount ensnares entire armies for her troops to slaughter.

A Time-Honored Classic. Deep within the Gloom Wood is a massive structure, a bizarre conglomeration of webs, materials, and the bodies of an adraknid's victims. For one hundred years the creature has been ensnaring adventurers, and its lair glistens with countless treasures.

TREASURE

Because they prey on humanoids, the webs of adraknids are always filled with treasure. The creatures have no interest in the shiny objects and don't clean out their lairs. Since an adraknid is sedentary, its home is filled with countless trinkets and more than a few treasures. The monstrosity's fearsome reputation often draws adventurers, many of whom carry magic items. For every decade an adraknid maintains the same lair, it contains at least one magic item of rare quality or greater, in addition to a smattering of other valuable (but nonmagical) items.

ECOLOGY

With a diet of exclusively humanoids, adraknids must lair near a reasonably sized population center that can sustain it. Preferring to set traps and ambush prey, adraknids prefer locations where they can spin tall webs and conceal themselves in cover. The monstrosities gladly move large objects to build better traps, and any community under threat by an adraknid often experiences significant changes in scenery as the horror weaves its webs. If an adraknid exhausts its supply of food, it moves to a new locale under the cover of night, preferring to only make its presence known after it has created a suitable lair. An adraknid has no concept of moderation and captures as many humanoids as it can given the opportunity, storing those it cannot immediately consume for later. Because of this, many communities under threat from an adraknid offer up sacrifices to prevent the monstrosity from moving closer or setting up shop in a more inconvenient area.

ADRAKNID

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 363 (22d20 + 132)
Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	25 (+7)	22 (+6)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +11, Dex +13, Con +12, Int +7
Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +11, Perception +17, Stealth +19, Survival +11
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 27
Languages —
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

TRAITS

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

Spell Suppression. At the start of each of its turns, the adraknid can choose to suppress a single spell or magical effect of 7th level or lower currently affecting it, becoming immune to its effects. This benefit lasts until the end of the adraknid's turn, at which point the spell or magical effect resumes (when applicable).

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

Additionally, the adraknid can use its webs as rope and treats its webs as a tool in which it is proficient.

Webweaver. When the adraknid moves, is moved, jumps, or falls and is not incapacitated, it can choose to leave behind lines of webbing in a 5-foot-wide line with a length equal to the distance it moved. A creature other than the adraknid that comes into contact with the webbing for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in contact with the webbing must succeed on a DC 21 Strength saving throw or become restrained (escape DC 21). The webbing can be suspended in midair between two points and is considered difficult terrain.

Additionally, the adraknid can spend 20 feet of movement to create a 20-foot square of webbing, which has an AC of 12 and 30 hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The adraknid uses its Cobweb (if available), then makes three attacks, only one of which may be a Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 33 (4d12 + 7) piercing damage. If the target is a flesh-and-blood creature, it must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or lose half of its current hit points (rounded down). A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on this saving throw.

Bristles. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 60/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) piercing damage.

Cobweb (Recharge 5–6). The adraknid fills a 30-foot cube within 120 feet of it with sticky cobwebs. Creatures within the area must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained (escape DC 21) until they leave the area or the cobwebs are destroyed. A creature that successfully saves moves to the nearest unoccupied space at the edge of the area. The cobwebs are considered an object (AC 12, 100 hit points) and are vulnerable to fire damage.

Cocoon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature restrained by webs. The target is cocooned by the adraknid and cannot spend movement or take actions other than attempting to free itself. A creature trying to free itself can take an action to attempt a DC 21 Strength (Athletics) check, freeing itself and destroying the cocoon on a success. The cocoon is an object (AC 16, 50 hit points) and is vulnerable to slashing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The adraknid 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. The adraknid regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Bristles. The adraknid makes a bristles attack.

Cocoon (Costs 2 Actions). The adraknid makes a Cocoon attack.

Deadly Precision. Until the end of its next turn, the next attack the adraknid makes deals an extra 36 (8d8) damage on a successful hit. An attack cannot benefit from this effect more than once per hit.

Hide. The adraknid takes the Hide action.

Leap. The adraknid jumps up to a distance and height equal to its speed.

DRAKOPEDE

The worst of a gruesome lot, the mighty drakopede is the crowning achievement of the druidic magic that fabricated the vermindrakes. A massive monstrosity of epic proportions, the drakopede is a crawling catastrophe that annihilates everything its path. A drakopede resembles a massive dragon-headed centipede coated in heavy scales as thick as trees, and its mouth is lined with scything pincers dripping with acid. Its body is alarmingly resilient, shrugging off all but the most powerful spells with ease and possessing physical might rivaling the mightiest dragon. When a drakopede awakens, it immediately embarks upon a destructive rampage. With a ravenous hatred for civilizations, the drakopede settles for nothing less than the complete genocide of those who defile the natural world, no matter how small their sins.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a drakopede with an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) ability check.

DRAKOPEDE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
20	Drakopedes are legendary monstrosities that seek the destruction of entire civilizations. They have no need to rest and are overwhelmingly strong, overpowering everything in their path. Part centipede, part dragon, and all terrible, the best solution to a drakopede problem is getting out of its way.
25	A drakopede has no weaknesses and eviscerates its foes in seconds. Its movement is formidable, trampling foes with its hundreds of legs while speeding toward its target. Their bodies are incredibly resilient to damage, and more than a few heroes have abandoned a fight with a drakopede after seeing the futile impact of their attacks.
30	The amount of punishment a drakopede can take is staggering. It can resist or ignore all but the most powerful magics and attacks. Its head is its only vulnerable point, which is difficult to injure due to the creature's frightful speed. Stay in the air and keep hammering it with everything you've got. Hold nothing back.

TACTICS

Drakopedes have little need for strategy or tactics. Their goals are simple and their methods straightforward. They barrel toward their targets as fast as they can, moving through walls, buildings, and other obstacles with impunity. In the event it is attacked, a drakopede responds with overwhelming force, biting and trampling enemies while it continues on its path of destruction. The drakopede seems to revel in carnage and causing collateral damage, and it always moves toward the greatest number of targets possible, even at the expense of its own safety. Drakopedes do not bother to finish downed enemies unless doing so directly contributes to its goals of genocide.

The Drakopede

I have been fortunate enough to have never lived through a drakopede awakening, but I have visited the ruins created by the last known specimen to emerge. The halfling race who dwelled there went extinct in a matter of weeks, and the rest of the world would have followed if not for the timely intervention by an army of heroes. There is no preparing for such a calamity. Dread it, flee it—destruction nevertheless arrives. If one could locate a drakopede while it gestates, these horrific encounters could be prevented. Unfortunately, all of my efforts thus far have failed to yield any meaningful results. It still remains a complete mystery as to how these creatures reproduce and grow, spawning seemingly at random with no discernable pattern or signs of warning.

— Talien Vos Karven



Classification: Brute

Favors: Barbarians, Clerics, Druids, Flight, Hit Points (High)

Foils: Bards, Paladins, Spellcasters, Spells (Disabling), Wizards

BEHIND THE CURTAIN – RUNNING DRAKOPEDES AT THE TABLE

Drakopedes are much larger than the average Gargantuan creature but does not use 2CGaming's rules for Titanic creatures. When running these creatures at your table, you can create a thrilling sense of the drakopede's size and power through a unique representation on the battlefield. Instead of the drakopede filling a square like other creatures, use a 10-foot-by-10-foot square to represent the drakopede's head, and then attach a string or thick piece of rope approximately 190 in-game feet to that space, to be dragged behind it whenever the drakopede moves. This is the drakopede's body, which should cleanly snake behind the creature, making for an awesome mechanic that your players are unlikely to forget. Note that this makes the drakopede a more challenging encounter, as its Massive feature significantly reduces damage not directed at the creature's head.

Easier Tactics – The drakopede focuses more on movement and collateral damage than hammering specific targets. It always puts some effort into damaging structures and objects (when available) and only uses Overrun on creatures directly in the way of its targets. The vermindrake won't keep its head out of reach of enemies, always turning to face them head on instead.

Harder Tactics – Drakopedes aren't stupid, and if suffering a concentrated assault , it will change its tactics. With its incredible speed, a drakopede can move above and below ground easily and will seek to end each of its turns with its head safely buried beneath the earth. The drakopede moves grappled targets into its space, subjecting them to a hellish experience as it races about the battlefield inflicting Overrun damage each turn it moves. The drakopede should be incredibly efficient, knocking out one character after the other. It should also have an instinctive understanding of spells it encounters, adapting its strategies to remove or circumvent troublesome magical effects.

PLOT HOOKS

Kaiju Assault. A drakopede awakens after its prolonged gestation and immediately barrels toward a metropolis with tens of thousands of residents. All attempts to slow or divert the vermindrake have failed, and it is estimated the monstrosity will arrive within three days.

Let Them Fight. A tarrasque and a drakopede are throwing down in a titanic conflict. While most are content to let the two titans duke it out, the collateral damage inflicted on the surrounding landscape is extensive to say the least. Whoever wins, the rest of the world loses.

Cabin Fever. Trapped on an island in the deep sea, a drakopede ceaselessly rampages, unable to swim the vast distance to the nearest shore. A powerful archdruid threatens to free the monstrosity unless reparations to nature are promptly made.

TREASURE

Drakopedes value nothing and do not keep treasure, though the ruins left in their wake often contain any valuables durable enough to survive its rampages. The chitin of a drakopede is too thick to make practical armor, but its scything pincers are incredibly sharp. These pincers can be fashioned into greatswords by a skilled weaponsmith, requiring a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) ability check to remove them from the drakopede's body without irreparably damaging the blades.

Drakopede Mandible

Weapon (greatsword), legendary (requires attunement)

A massive blade fashioned from an entire drakopede mandible, this unusual blade is twice as heavy as an ordinary greatsword and twice as sharp. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by the blade is cut in half. Additionally, when you take the Attack action and only make attacks with the blade, you can make a single attack with the weapon in addition to the number of attacks you would normally make.

ECOLOGY

Drakopedes have almost no known ecology. The creatures gestate deep underground for decades before emerging, at which point they go on an endless destructive rampage until they are slain or die from exhaustion. Drakopedes have never been observed reproducing or doing anything nonviolent, so it is a mystery as to where the monstrosities come from. It is almost impossible to locate a drakopede grub intentionally, with tremendous rewards given to any who discover the defenseless infants before they become unstoppable. The creatures seem to have no interest in even eating, and those that could not be killed often starved to death despite the abundance of food all around them. Many a scholar is desperate for more information on drakopedes and will pay handsomely for any new information that comes to light about their life cycle and behavior.

DRAKOPEDE

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)
Hit Points 799 (41d20 + 369)
Speed 80 ft., burrow 40 ft., climb 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	18 (+4)	29 (+9)	14 (+2)	23 (+6)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +18, Con +17, Int +14, Cha +4
Skills Athletics +18, Perception +14, Survival +14
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 300 ft., tremorsense 200 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages —
Challenge 27 (105,000 XP)

TRAITS

Devastator. The drakopede can spend movement to deal damage to structures adjacent to its head. The drakopede deals 50 bludgeoning damage to an object or structure within 5 feet of its head for every 10 feet spent in this manner.

Massive. The drakopede is 200 feet long and 10 feet wide, typically occupying a 50-foot-by-50-foot square on the battlefield. Attacks and effects that cannot reach its head deal half damage to the drakopede, and it is immune to any effect that would force it to attempt an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw if its head is out of range of the effect.

Overrun. The drakopede ignores nonmagical difficult terrain and damages anything in spaces through which it moves. When the drakopede moves into a space for the first time on its turn, it deals 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage to everything in that space. A creature can only take damage from this effect once per turn.

Spell Suppression. At the start of each of its turns, the drakopede can choose to suppress all spells or magical effects of 8th level or lower currently affecting it, becoming immune to those effects. This benefit lasts until the end of the drakopede's turn, at which point spells or magical effects resume (when applicable).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The drakopede makes one attack—Bite, Pincer, or Spit—and up to six Claw attacks, only two of which can be against the same target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12 + 10) piercing damage. If the target is a flesh-and-blood creature, it must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw or take 35 (10d6) acid damage. A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on this saving throw.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (1d8 + 10) slashing damage, and the drakopede may grapple the target (escape DC 26).

Pincer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 49 (6d12 + 10) slashing damage. If the target is reduced to 0 hit points by this attack, it is sliced in half.

Spit. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, range 120/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 73 (14d8 + 10) acid damage.

REACTIONS

Crush Magic. When the drakopede is prevented from entering a space by a spell or magical effect, it can take a reaction to attempt a Strength (Athletics) check versus the caster's spell save DC. On a success, the drakopede ends the spell or magical effect.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The drakopede 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. The drakopede regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Bestial Rage. The drakopede ends one condition of the following options currently affecting it: incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, stunned, unconscious. If one of these conditions would prevent the drakopede from taking this action, it may still take this action.

Claw. The drakopede makes a Claw attack.

Rear Up. The drakopede rears its head, using its lengthy body to increase its reach. Until the end of its next turn, the drakopede's reach is increased by 60 feet, but it cannot spend movement.

Savage (Costs 2 Actions). The drakopede makes a Bite, Pincer, or Spit attack.

Trample. The drakopede moves up to its speed.

Voidborn

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, and magic is no different. As civilization flourishes and magic becomes commonplace, the price of its use remains largely unknown and unseen. Every work of magic—minor or mighty, arcane or divine—leaves behind a void. At first a mere curiosity, millennia of abundant magic use has strengthened it, matured it, and given it a mind all its own. The void, known most commonly as "antimagic," is the check and balance, and it is eager to set the world right. Pulsing like a dark heart, the void seeks to eat magic, birthing and shaping creations to feed its dark hunger.

Voidborn are the answer to magical creatures and beings, even though many of them were at one time magical themselves. They are typically created in the aftermath of great magical works, whether it be the casting of a *wish* spell, the creation of a magical artifact, or a world-ending battle between spellcasters. More than a few archmages have been consumed by a survivor of their most powerful spells, the creature endowed with mysterious powers from an unknown source.

Each voidborn is radically different from all others. Their origins are bizarre, but they are bound together by the void's warping hunger. The transformation process is trying, and the strain is well beyond what most can bear. When the transformation ends, a voidborn's senses are honed to razor sharpness, and the unending hunger birthed within them spurs them on toward the nearest source of magic.

TALIEN'S NOTES

No subject is of greater interest to the arcane community than the void. Indeed, it serves as an object of common study for those who channel magic of the gods or of nature, or those who are even remotely invested in the long-term survival of this world. I will summarize. All magic, whatever the source, draws power from the weave. It leaves behind a gap, a void, which diminishes as the weave naturally restores itself. In the past, this was hardly a matter of concern, for few could use enough magic to create more than a pinprick void in the weave. But in this age of arcane abundance, our over-reliance on spells is creating something dangerous—void pockets that do not shrink. Instead, they grow. They hunger. They think and scheme. These creatures are called the voidborn. There is no good outcome here, no place for them in the natural cycle. They must be destroyed.

VOID INFLUENCE

The void leaves no being untouched. Whether merely grazed by its shadow or fully bathed in its energy, if creatures walk away from a brush with the void, they are changed by the experience. Thankfully the void's presence is rare, typically appearing in areas that have been subjected to considerable magical damage. Characters that are directly exposed to such areas or to voidborn creatures can become affected by the latent energy, gaining a void influence. When choosing a void influence, select deliberately from the options in the void influence table, roll a d8 to determine the effect, or feel free to come up with your own. At your discretion, these changes last until removed by *greater restoration* or more powerful magic, or they may be permanent.

VOID INFLUENCE

D8	EFFECT
1	You become unable to sleep peacefully, wracked with nightmares about being trapped in a slug's body as salt is poured upon you by laughing, faceless figures.
2	Toadstools randomly grow from your skin and hair, often in bright, vibrant colors. Trying to remove them is painful, and they always grow back within 24 hours.
3	You grow older or younger by 1d12 years, at the DM's discretion.
4	You always perceive whispers at the edge of your hearing but are unable to make out what is being said. No one else can hear the whispers, and people look at you askance when you bring them up.
5	You can see a ghostly afterimage of yourself, and others can see it too. It doesn't always appear, and it doesn't always match what you do exactly. Sometimes it fails where you succeed, and other times it succeeds where you fail.
6	You gain an unquenchable thirst for drugs and alcohol, desperate to forget the things you have seen.
7	Animals dislike you; dogs bark and cats hiss when you pass by. They smell the otherworldly stench upon you.
8	Eyes randomly appear on your skin but switch places from day to day. You can see out of them.

NULL TIDE

Is there any greater desperation than that of the drowning grasping for one last breath? In the darkest depths of the ocean, prayers for salvation may reach the ears of an unwelcome savior. Humanoids from both land and sea have been twisted by the void that lurks below the waves, infused with a dark parody of sorcery to become null tides. These shapeshifting spellcasters travel in animal form, ever searching for the next wizard or druid to obliterate in a contest of magical might. They are the most conversational of the voidborn, but they use their gift of language primarily to taunt their foes. In rare moments during which their original consciousness emerges, a null tide may beg for a swift end to its torment. When not in an assumed shape, a null tide resembles an oily mass, squiring across any surface it encounters with an insatiable hunter.



VOIDTOUCHED TEMPLATE

Those who come into prolonged contact with the void are changed irrevocably. Such creatures are voidtouched, altered into strange new forms and bound to the whims of the voidborn. The following template can be applied to any creature, for the void does not discriminate. It should not be applied to characters—characters with this much exposure to the void are no longer under the players' control and instead become creatures controlled by the DM.

Type. The creature's type changes to aberration.

Damage Resistances. The creature gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magic weapons.

Condition Immunities. The creature gains immunity to the charmed and frightened conditions.

Challenge. The creature's Challenge Rating increases by 3.

Traits. The creature gains the following traits:

- **Draining Aura.** At the start of each of the voidtouched creature's turns, creatures within 10 feet of it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + the voidtouched creature's proficiency bonus + its Wisdom modifier) or lose 6 (1d12) hit points, and have their hit point maximum is reduced to their current hit points. This effect can only be removed by *greater restoration* or similar healing magic. If a creature's hit point maximum would be reduced to 0 by this feature, it is reduced to 1 instead.
- **Void Resilience.** The voidtouched has resistance to all damage from spells and has advantage on saving throws against spells. If the voidtouched succeeds on a saving throw against a spell and suffers an effect on the success, it instead suffers no effect.

Actions. The creature gains the following actions.

- **Consume Arcana** (*Recharge 5–6*). The voidtouched chooses up to six creatures it can see within 120 feet and attempts to siphon magic from them. Targets must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 8 + the voidtouched creature's proficiency bonus + its Wisdom modifier) or expend two spell slots of their choice. The voidtouched regains 10 hit points per level of each spell slot lost, and the target takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage per level of each spell slot lost.
- **Strength of the Void.** A voidtouched creature's attacks no longer cause damage; instead, the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage the attack would have dealt.

The Null Tide

A void-powered spellcaster seems like an impossibility. Even abjurers, with their mastery of counterspell, don't come close to that descriptor. But null tides are exactly that. Their magic tears at a being's fundamental existence, akin to the claws and teeth of other voidborn, and somehow their spells are exempt from their natural aura of nullification. Like all voidborn, they are tragic creatures, innocents corrupted into weaponry for a vile agenda. Periodic glimpses of who they once were might make you hesitate, but I urge you to act without mercy, as they certainly will.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Controller
Favors: Barbarians, Hit Points (High), Monks, Rogues
Foils: Bards, Sorcerers, Spells, Weapons (Magical), Wizards

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a null tide with an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

NULL TIDE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
15	Some dark coastal waters hide a predator worse than any leviathan. When a shaman, druid, or other individual with a strong connection to nature and the oceans succumbs to the void, the caster is twisted into a null tide: a void-fueled magic-user that hunts its former comrades.
20	Null tides are extremely efficacious, capable of unleashing potent magic. Their spells tear at the lifeforce of their targets and are almost impossible to resist. Null tides are also shapechangers capable of adopting animal forms to travel the seas and skies at great speed.
24	Null tides are not especially tough. They are vulnerable to effects that target the body, and while they are highly resistant to spells, other magical effects maintain their ordinary level of potency.

TACTICS

The null tide is a complex creature with a lot of abilities and the multitude of combat options that come from being a spellcaster. First, don't forget its core voidborn traits: Draining Aura and Void Resilience. When casting spells, remember the Voidcasting trait causes hit point loss, rather than damage, which allows the creature to bypass damage resistances and immunities. Choosing which spells to cast is the trickiest part of running the null tide. Start using high-level spells first. *Chain lightning* is a great choice if a party is clustered together. *Feeblemind* works extremely well against characters with low Intelligence, typically barbarians and paladins, but can also shut down some Charisma- and Wisdom-based spellcasters. Once the null tide is concentrating on something, use *cone of cold* for more damage or a higher-

MEKALA, THE FIRST NULL TIDE

Originally the princess of an island nation, Mekala alone survived the destruction wrought by a massive tsunami. Calling on spirits of sea and sky, she staved off the worst, protecting her own people within a pocket of air. But the strain of the spell, along with her desperation, summoned the void. The tides swept their homes aside and the water pulled her under, the void gripping her tight and twisting her. The protection faded, Mekala was washed away into the ocean's deep, and her people died; the ocean's merciless tides returning life to whence it came.

The void robbed her of thought and will, changing her into a voracious beast. Her people's most sacred holy relic, the *Hook of the Fisher-Kings*, changed with her, and she wields its power to shift her form and travel the world in search of prey. These forms are marked by grim features. The shark's eyes are blood red, the orca's patterns are inverted, and the hawk's plumage makes it a shadow in the sky. All other null tides draw on her example and can take on these forms as well.

Mekala hunts her former druid fellows, bringing a wave of death and blood even to those who hide far from shore. Stories told around a crackling fire speak of the princess who drowns spellcasters under a swell of rage. Those who know the tale watch the seas and skies, keeping a weather eye on the horizon, ever fearful of the null tide.

Hook of the Fisher-Kings

Wondrous item (very rare), requires attunement

Passed down for generations, legend goes that the hook was given to the first fisherman by the gods themselves. The hook, made of bone and covered in runes, gives it holder power over the seas and skies, and gave rise to the first fisher-king who tamed the monstrous deep. As it has been passed down from hand to hand, the gods, in turn, have bestowed their respect and devotion on its wielder. Mekala herself was overjoyed to receive the blessing of the hook, but now the fisher-kings are gone, and only Mekala remains. The first null tide carries the hook in grim silence, wielding its power to kill everyone who has tried to recover it.

While holding the *Hook of the Fisher-Kings*, you gain a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls. Additionally, as a bonus action you may cast *warding wind*† or *water walk*.

† This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*

level spell slot to cast *chain lightning* again. Use *banishment* if one character in the party is dangerous and has low Charisma, or a high-level *hold person* to immobilize multiple characters. *Ice storm* and *tidal wave* are good sources of extra damage if the null tide is already concentrating on a spell.

Finally, the null tide's Change Shape ability is primarily for roleplaying purposes, giving it the means to travel the world, but it can make for a fun thematic element if the fight starts with the null tide in animal form and it shifts partway through the fight. That does take up the null tide's turn, so it will make the fight easier if you do this.

Easier Tactics – Making this fight easier is all about what spells you don't cast. Don't cast *shield*, *feeblemind*, or *simulacrum*. Focus on inefficiently targeting spells like *chain lightning*, and don't scale up *hold person*, leaving it at 2nd level so it can't paralyze more than one character. If you really need to, have the null tide cast *frostbite* twice on a few turns to substantially lower its damage output.

Harder Tactics – Start the fight with the null tide having cast *simulacrum* already and taken a long rest since then. The *simulacrum* has identical statistics except that its hit point maximum is half of the original's and it is lacking its 7th-level spell slot. It appears indistinguishable from the null tide. Start the fight with a combo of *feeblemind* and *chain lightning* for their main spells. From there, it's just a matter of using Multispell to throw out a ton of damage while the party scrambles for cover. Save the null tide's reaction for *counterspell*—with both the original and its simulacrum, you can shut down spellcasters effortlessly.

PLOT HOOKS

Unnatural Hunter. A shark with red eyes has been sighted near a coastal village, picking off sailors who stray too far from the shore. Any druids who try to commune with the creature are pulled beneath the waves and never seen again.

Omen. A great black hawk circles over a coastal town every evening, which many superstitious locals take as a sign of ill fortune. Combined with a number of disappearances, the village becomes paralyzed with fear, seeking a spiritual solution to the problem.

Lurking Terror. While the party is traveling by water, an orca dogs their ship. It swims all night and day, never ceasing, but never coming too close. At night the crew is plagued with maddening whispers and disturbing visions, slowly driving them insane.

NULL TIDE

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 165 (30d8 + 30)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	22 (+6)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +6, Int +6, Wis +11
Skills Medicine +11, Nature +6, Perception +11, Stealth +8
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Common, Druidic, Primordial
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

TRAITS

Draining Aura. At the start of each of its turns, creatures within 30 feet of the null tide must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or lose 19 (3d12) hit points and have their hit point maximum reduced to their current hit points. This effect can only be removed by *greater restoration* or similar healing magic. If a creature's hit point maximum would be reduced to 0 by this feature, it is reduced to 1 instead.

Spellcasting. The null tide is a 16th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks). The null tide has the following spells prepared, which it can cast without the need for material components:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *frostbite*†
1st level (4 slots): *dissonant whispers*, *hideous laughter*, *shield*
2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness*, *darkness*, *hold person*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *tidal wave*†
4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *ice storm*
5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold*, *mislead*
6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*, *investiture of ice*†
7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *simulacrum*
8th level (1 slot): *feeblemind*

Void Resilience. The null tide has resistance to all damage from spells and has advantage on saving throws against spells. If the null tide succeeds on a saving throw against a spell and suffers an effect on the success, it instead suffers no effect.

Voidcasting. When the null tide deals damage to a creature with a spell, the creature instead takes no damage and loses a number of hit points equal to the damage that would have been dealt (before damage resistances and immunities).

TRAITS

Multispell. The null tide casts two spells, one of which must be a cantrip.

Change Shape (3/Day). The null tide may change into the form of a giant eagle, hunter shark, or killer whale. Its equipment merges with its form. In its new form, it retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, and Dexterity are replaced with those of the new form, and it gains any special senses, proficiencies, traits, actions, and reactions that the new form has but it lacks. It can cast spells with verbal or somatic components in the new form.

Voidbolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +11 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target loses 16 (3d10) hit points.

† This spell can be found in the official 5E supplement, *XGE*

TREASURE

Null tides leave nothing behind when they are slain, but their absence creates a relief of tension on the seas. When a null tide is destroyed, oceans within 100 miles of its death are supernaturally calmed and the winds become favorable for whoever sails there. These effects last for 1 week, after which the area returns to normal.

ECOLOGY

Null tides are always on the hunt, but their appetites ebb and flow like the oceans. They go through periods of intense hunger that drive them to brutal acts of aggression and more dormant phases during which they wait and watch. The rate at which these phases oscillate varies dramatically, with some null tides switching every day and others going on monthlong killing sprees. A null tide takes great care to not drive off those it threatens. It would prefer its presence be known, but its nature remain mysterious. Many a superstitious community have managed the presence of a null tide by offering up spellcasters as sacrifices, which the void born always accept0. In turn the null tide will refrain from killing mindlessly, turning the fears of the innocent into a tool to further persecute and destroy those that wield magic.

Xanaris, Eyes that Bite

Xanaris is the biggest and most diabolical of the eyes that bite. Colloquially known as the Mage-Eater or the Arcane Maw, in our last encounter he said he would eat me last so I could watch every ounce of magic fade from the world before I perish. That battle served as a grim reminder of the importance of diversity in one's adventuring companions. Without the quick blade-work of Ava Sonos, I would never have penned this tome, and such a tragic future is best left uncontemplated. At heart, Xanaris is a yeti, a creature of the mountains that is afraid of fire. The void twisted and magnified his hatred, and he works to return the world to a magic-less state. A future I obviously prefer to avoid.

— Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Brute

Favors: Barbarians, Fear (Protection from), Mobility (high), Monks, Rogues

Foils: Sorcerers, Spells, Warlocks, Weapons (Magical), Wizards

EYES THAT BITE

Humanoids, giants, and others of similar ilk touched by the void swell with physical strength, becoming hulking brutes that devour magic (and magic-users) with abandon. Whatever form these poor creatures once held is replaced with a convulsing mass of tentacled shadows. Their eyes fill with a bleak redness that saps the life from all who stare into them, and their incisors are lined with runes that drain the magic from their victims. They are without compassion, filled with the deepest hunger for arcana in all its forms.

Wizard's woe, wizard's woe
Teeth so long and twin red glow
Get in bed and douse the light
Sunset calls the eyes that bite!

– Unattributed nursery rhyme

LORE

A character can learn the following information about an eyes that bite with an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

EYES THAT BITE LORE

DC	INFORMATION
17	There are rumors of massive shadowy creatures that suck the magic from other creatures the way a vampire sucks blood. Dubbed the "eyes that bite" by the few survivors, these twisted echoes were once large and powerful creatures before direct contact with the void.
22	Eyes that bite are brutal voidborn of prodigious strength. They project an aura of antimagic, and their bites drain the magical energy out of a spellcaster, healing the eyes that bite in the process. Though not especially quick, the void energy flowing through them allows them to fly.
27	While devastating to spellcasters, eyes that bite have no special abilities to suppress or protect themselves from nonmagical items. Nonmagical hindrances such as steel nets and traps can buy time but given the great strength of the eyes that bite, such reprieves are temporary.

TACTICS

Eyes that bite are patient hunters that become utterly reckless when they leap into battle. They fixate on a spellcaster and stalk it until they get close enough to attack, and they will wait for a short time to try to get their prey alone. If that isn't an option, they attack anyway. An eyes that bite starts out using Void Breath on the spellcaster's allies, then it rushes into melee range and begins biting the spellcaster. It focuses on its target until it has drained every ounce of the caster's magical energy, the target is dead, or both.

Don't forget about its Gaze into the Void trait—the party should be constantly debating whether to avert their eyes or take the risk of nearly lethal damage. When using Null Zone, focus on any effect that is preventing the eyes that bite from moving or taking actions. Damaging spells are less important. Use Void Breath every time it recharges, primarily to split

the party and block line of sight so it becomes more difficult for them to help each other.

Easier Tactics – Spread out Bite attacks between multiple targets, and spend some time attacking characters who aren't spellcasters. You can also have the eyes that bite retreat when reduced to fewer than half its hit point maximum, giving the party time to catch their breath and heal before chasing it down.

Harder Tactics – Use Void Breath on the spellcaster target and run the eyes that bite into melee combat with the caster to finish the job. The eyes that bite won't take damage from its own Void Breath cloud, and its truesight allows it to see clearly in the darkness. Unless the party has their own means of seeing through the darkness, the spellcaster inside is going to be dead in short order. Remember that most teleportation effects like *misty step* specify "a location you can see," and a caster surrounded by magical darkness can see little.

PLOT HOOKS

Predator. An eyes that bite picks a spellcaster in the party as its next target. It keeps a safe distance, waiting for the character to become separated from the party before striking. The creature wants to keep the PC alive as an inexhaustible supply of magical energy.

Grisly Fate. A giant the party knows is corrupted by the void, perhaps by accident, or perhaps in a valiant act of self-sacrifice. It demands the party kill it before it's too late. Should the party wait too long before acting, the giant will transform into an eyes that bite.

Trouble At School. A pair of eyes that bite takes up residence in the forest outside a wizarding school or bardic college, and students are disappearing. Then the teachers start to vanish too. Soon the school will be an empty shell.

EYES THAT BITE

Huge aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 215 (17d12 + 105)
Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	14 (+2)	24 (+7)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +13, Con +12, Wis +10
Skills Perception +10, Stealth +12, Survival +10
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magic weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, prone
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

TRAITS

Draining Aura. At the start of each of its turns, creatures within 30 feet of the eyes that bite must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or lose 19 (3d12) hit points and have their hit point maximum reduced to their current hit points. This effect can only be removed by *greater restoration* or similar healing magic. If a creature's hit point maximum would be reduced to 0 by this feature, it is reduced to 1 instead.

Gaze into the Void. When a creature that can see the eyes that bite starts its turn within 30 feet of it, the eyes that bite can force it to attempt a DC 20 Constitution saving throw if the eyes that bite isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature is reduced to 0 hit points. Otherwise, the creature takes 21 (6d6) psychic damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. Unless surprised, a creature can avert its gaze to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If a creature does so, it has disadvantage on attack rolls against the eyes that bite until the start of its next turn. If the creature looks at the eyes that bite in the meantime, it must immediately attempt the saving throw.

Magic Scent. The eyes that bite has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) ability checks that rely on smell. Additionally, the eyes can bite can smell spells and magical effects up to 1 mile away and can track a creature by scent up to one hour after the creature casts a spell.

Undetectable. The eyes that bite cannot be targeted by any divination magic or through magical scrying sensors. Additionally, the eyes that bite is invisible to creatures that have one or more unexpended spell slots.

Void Resilience. The eyes that bite has resistance to all damage from spells and advantage on saving throws to resist spells. If the eyes that bite succeeds on a saving throw against a spell and suffers an effect on the success, it instead suffers no effect.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eyes that bite makes two Bite attacks. The eyes that bite can replace one of its Bite attacks with Void Breath.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target loses 30 (5d8 + 8) hit points and must expend one unexpended spell slot of its choice. The eyes that bite regains 7 (2d6) hit points per level of the spell slot expended.

Void Breath (Recharge 5–6). The eyes that bite exhales void energy in a 15-foot-wide, 30-foot-long line. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or lose 52 (8d12) hit points, or half as much on a success.

Additionally, the affected area becomes filled with magical darkness for 1 minute. Sound cannot be produced in the area, and when an enemy creature enters the area for the first time on a turn or ends its turn within the area, it must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or lose 52 (8d12) hit points, or half as much on a success.

REACTIONS

Active Nullification. As a reaction when a creature the eyes that bite can see casts a spell, it can attempt to interrupt the casting. The caster must immediately expend a spell slot of 3rd level or higher as part of casting the spell, or the spell fails.

XANARIS, THE MAGE-EATER

When he was a mere yeti, Xanaris lived in an uneasy balance with the mountain folk. He would eat those who wandered too far afield, and they would chase him away with spears and torches when he came too close to the village. War was not uncommon in those times, and during a particularly violent conflict, Xanaris stole into the closest village to steal an easy meal in the confusion. But the humans had discovered a new kind of fire. A cadre of mages sent a fusillade of fire and shadow, light and lightning, churning the snow and bodies into bloody mush. Xanaris, his body battered, and bones broken, crawled from the wreckage, sheer anger holding him conscious.

In the wake of this brutality, the void stretched its inky tendrils out of the embers and took hold of the yeti. Already large for his kind, the void coursed through him, turning his shaggy fur pitch black, his eyes red, and cursing him with a bottomless hunger. Xanaris hunted down and slew every mage on the mountain, devouring their essence in a fruitless attempt to slake the unslakable. Xanaris then traveled far from the mountain on which he once lived, traversing much of the material plane and other realms pretending to be no more than a simple-minded beast.

TREASURE

By their very nature, voidborn leave little behind when they are slain. Their bodies collapse into nothingness, fading into the void that gave them life. The death of a voidborn—and the resulting collapse in the void—can sometimes cause an upswelling of magic as the weave rushes in, and in these cases, a *solstice star* is formed. This tiny sphere offers protections against magic and from the energies of the void, and they are held in high regard by spellcasters and those who hunt voidborn. Such individuals would pay 15,000 gp for a *solstice star*.

Solstice Star

Wondrous item, very rare

Composed of blended void and magical energies, this 3-inch-diameter, perfect sphere is a mixture of iridescent white and obsidian black. The solstice star has 4 charges, which can be used only when the item is held. When you are forced to attempt a saving throw against a voidborn or a spell, you can spend 1 charge to automatically succeed on that saving throw. This choice must be made before the saving throw is attempted. The solstice star cannot regain expended charges, and it shrinks slightly with each use. When the last charge is used, the star contracts to an infinitesimal point and vanishes.

ECOLOGY

Eyes that bite spend the entirety of their existence hunting spellcasters—they have no other purpose. Gifted with an instinctual understanding of magic, eyes that bite are able to circumvent most magical defenses undetected. These voidborn only travel under the cover of darkness and will cross great distances in search of new prey. Eyes that bite will take great care to avoid being spotted by anyone, as even a rumor of its presence can send the most laid-back bard running to the hills. While they have no interest in nonmagical creatures, eyes that bite will not tolerate any threat to its existence, attacking anything that threatens its lair. However, they will cooperate with anything that can provide a hearty meal of powerful magic. More than a few evil spellcasters have been brought down by a good aligned foe willing to make a deal with the devil.

CONCERT OF LOST SOULS

The void corrupts as readily as it consumes. Though beasts are typically spared from its appetite, even simple animals may blunder into that which they should not. The void devours their essence, perverting their forms into a dark reflection of itself. In rare cases, entire packs of animals are twisted and remade, their life essence bound together and unified by a carnal hunger for magic. Called a concert of lost souls, these pitiable creatures ravage the landscape as a swarm of shadowy horrors. Insatiable and unrelenting, these creatures scar the very fabric of magic wherever they venture. They are the enemies of all existence, for a world without magic is a dark prospect indeed.

LORE

A character can learn the following information about a concert of lost souls with an Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (Nature), or Intelligence (Religion) ability check.

CONCERT OF LOST SOULS LORE

DC	INFORMATION
18	The void, considered by many to be the balancing opposite to magic, usually affects only those who can cast spells. Usually. There are rare instances of the void corrupting beasts, blending their simple minds into one corrupted consciousness that shares multiple bodies. These packs are known as a concert of lost souls, and they are tireless predators of all who rely on magic.
23	As a pack of void infused creatures, the concert of lost souls can chase down and attack multiple targets simultaneously. Each body is fast and can dodge most attacks thrown its way, and its cackling laughter tears at the psyche, making it difficult to concentrate on the battle at hand. It possesses the standard voidborn ability to shrug off troublesome magics and drain the lifeforce of nearby foes.
28	A concert of lost souls is vulnerable to ranged weapon attacks and is best stopped via nonmagical means. Heavy nets, powerful traps, and any other physical impediments you can rally will serve you well. If you can separate the lost souls from each other by a great distance, the whole pack becomes significantly weakened.

TACTICS

A concert of the lost operates much like a wolf pack, though with a supernatural degree of coordination and strategy. Though agile, the concert is not

given to stealth or subtlety. Because it has no limited-use abilities, most of your choices will involve where to send each of the pack members and whom to attack with their bites. You want to position the concert's parts such that as many characters as possible will be hit by Cackling Laughter. Try to keep two of the concert's parts attacking the concert's primary target to consistently benefit from its Pack Tactics trait.

The concert is more vulnerable to area-of-effect spells than usual because each part in the area takes damage from them. Unless they have nothing left to lose, no more than two parts should be close to the others at any given time. Don't forget about their Draining Aura ability, as four creatures overlapping the same effect on a target is devastating in the extreme. Note that with its Pack Of the Damned feature, the sight lines of each part are hugely important. Unless a PC is hidden from all the parts in a concert, it cannot be hidden from any of them, nullifying a character's stealth.

Easier Tactics – Run the concert more like a pack of actual animals, with all four parts circling the party and only two of them rushing in at a time for hit-and-run attacks. This can be challenging for melee characters, so leave the parts near the characters and retreat on the following turn. You can also use Cackling Laughter every other turn instead of every turn. Keep the parts grouped up, as even an inexperience party understands the virtue of hitting multiple targets simultaneously.

Harder Tactics – A hit-and-run charge on a single character is absolutely brutal. Find a character far from allies and have all four parts run in, use their Bite attacks and Cackling Laughter, then retreat with the rest of their movement from their Cunning Action. If you need to really ramp things up, use the concert on a battlefield with lots of line of sight breaks, allowing each part to have cover in-between turns. If all the parts go in different directions, the players will struggle with a proper countermeasure due to the chaotic nature of the combat. They may not even realize they are dealing with a single creature, adding to their confusion and forcing suboptimal plays.

The Concert of Lost Souls

Laughter in the night, patchy fur wrapped around gleaming teeth, and cruel sentience in place of animal instinct. That is a concert of lost souls, animals who suffer a fate worse than death. The void grants its mind the gift of thought and then binds its will in chains of hatred. Each concert consists of several animals who share one consciousness, their multiple bodies moving in perfect unison as they press onward to hunt and kill anyone with a touch of magic in them. A concert has no sense of self-preservation and is short lived, running itself to the point of complete physical breakdown in pursuit of prey. To end one is a kindness.

– Talien Vos Karven

Classification: Skirmisher

Favors: Area-of-Effect, Barbarians, Fighters, Hit Points (High), Rangers

Foils: Bards, Rogues, Single-Target, Stealth, Wizards

EIRA, THE CACKLE OF LOST SOULS

A newborn litter of spotted hyena cubs were spotted by a high priest, who took them to be a sign of his goddess. The priest felt light shining from the cubs and their mother, a source of unrestrained divine power. But the priest was deceived. Under his care the light turned dark. The void, lurking in the recesses of the prima divinity, consumed the hyenas. Fighting desperately, the mother hyena died within sight of her helpless cubs. The infants gave in to the void, their mewling sadness blossoming into white-hot fury.

The resulting power surge changed the family, warping the newborns into fully grown hyenas in the blink of an eye. As one, they tore the high priest limb from limb. Possessing sharp teeth, a chilling laugh, and a dark hunger, Eira is a ferocious killer with the mind of a child. Known as the cackle of lost souls, she stalks priests and other servants of the gods, hoping one more death will purge her of the pain of their mother's death.

PLOT HOOKS

Umbral Howl. Where once a nearby forest was a thriving ecosystem tended by a circle of druids, now there are only wolves. Wolves with gleaming fangs, darkened eyes, and laughter that echoes through the underbrush. The druids are gone.

The Hoard. A massive hoard of five concerts of lost souls has been spotted moving toward civilization. A plan is put in motion to draw the creatures away into more manageable groups, with a group of expert heroes needed to put the lost souls down once they have been separated.

Lament Of The Lost. A magically separated part of a concert of lost souls is being kept as a scientific curiosity at a famous university. Each night the creature howls, calling other members of its concert together. Unwilling to part with their specimen, the university is looking to hire heroes who will take out the swiftly approaching pack.

TREASURE

A concert of lost souls is uniquely dangerous among the voidborn for its ability to create pockets of void energy. While dangerous, these pockets are able to imbue the essence of the void into anything they come into contact with. While most materials cannot survive direct contact with the void and still be useful to sane beings, objects made of solid adamantine are able to withstand exposure. If an adamantine weapon is thrust into one of these pockets, it develops remarkable properties from this infusion, becoming the item detailed below.

Antimagic Weapon

Weapon (any metal weapon), legendary (requires attunement)

This weapon is pitch black and absorbs all light. When you hit an object or creature that is affected with spells or magical effects of 8th level or lower, those effects are suppressed until the start of your next turn. Additionally, when you deal damage with this weapon, you instead deal no damage and the target loses a number of hit points equal to the damage that would have been dealt (before resistances of immunities are applied).

ECOLOGY

A concert of lost souls is always on the prowl, tearing across the land in search of signs of spellcasting. Once they have located a large concentration of magic the concert bides its time, surveying the situation and picking targets. It's difficult to not notice a concert's presence corrupting the land, forcing a rapid and forceful response from those who wish to keep living there. Thankfully a concert of lost souls must feed upon the flesh of a spellcaster at least 10th level or higher or starve to death within a month. Weaker spellcasters would do well to avoid these creatures, for a concert cannot determine which magic users can satiate them until after they have fed.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region around a pack of lost souls is corrupted by its presence, creating the following effects within 1 mile of a pack wherever it travels.

- The area where the pack feeds becomes contaminated with antimagic, suppressing spells and magical effects in the area.
- When a creature would regain spell slots, it instead regains half as many spell slots (rounded down, minimum of one)
- Pockets of void energy appear, exposing creatures that come into contact with them to the void.

These effects fade over the course of 10 years, though the process of restoring the environment can be greatly accelerated by powerful spellcasters treating the area with restorative and healing magic.

CONCERT OF LOST SOULS

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 375 (30d12 + 180)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	26 (+8)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	23 (+6)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +14, Con +12, Wis +12, Cha +11
Skills Intimidation +11, Perception +12, Survival +12
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magic weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 22
Languages understands all languages but cannot speak
Challenge 18 (20,000 XP), assumes four lost souls in the encounter

TRAITS

Concert Of The Void. A concert of lost souls is one creature, but its body is made up of four independent parts, each of which has an appearance of a medium beast of the same species. These parts are individual "lost souls" and are considered unique creatures for the purposes of targeting effects. For example, one part can be paralyzed by a *hold monster* spell while the other three are not affected, while a *fireball* that affects multiple parts damages the concert multiple times. When the concert spends movement, each of its parts may move up to its speed as a part of that movement.

Pack Of The Damned. The concert of lost soul's parts can never be more than 500 ft. away from each other. If one of its parts would be moved beyond that area, it immediately reappears within 15 ft. of another one of concert's parts. Additionally, the concert has the following benefits due to its multiple independent parts.

- Advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws and ability checks.
- The concert can perceive everything each of its parts can perceive, and vice versa.

Cunning Action. As a bonus action on each of its turns, the concert can take the Dash or Disengage action.

Draining Aura. At the start of each of its turns, creatures within 10 feet of a part of a concert of lost souls must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or lose 19 (3d12) hit points and have their hit point maximum reduced to their current hit points. This effect can only be removed by *greater restoration* or similar healing magic. If a creature's hit point maximum would be reduced to 0 by this feature, it is reduced to 1 instead. A creature within overlapping areas produced by this effect due to the creature's multiple parts must attempt the save against the aura produced by each part.

Pack Tactics. The concert has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of its allies or parts is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally or part isn't incapacitated.

Void Resilience. The concert has resistance to all damage from spells and advantage on saving throws to resist spells. If the lost soul succeeds on a saving throw against a spell and suffers an effect on the success, it instead suffers no effect.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The concert makes four bite attacks; one with each of its parts.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target loses 30 (5d8 + 8) hit points. If another of the concert's parts is within 5 ft. of the target, it may take a reaction to make a single Bite attack against the target.

Cackling Laughter. The concert emits a haunting cackle of laughter that can be heard up to 15 ft. away. Enemy creatures that hear the cackle must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or take 22 (4d10) psychic damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Appendix

FINDING THE PERFECT MONSTER

In this section you will find all the monsters in the book, sorted by Classification, Favors, and Foils. The "Classification" table is alphabetized on the monsters role in an encounters (Artillery, Brute, etc.), whereas the "Favors" and "Foils" tables are both ordered alphabetically by their Keywords (Area-of-Effect, Bards, Fire (Damage), etc.).

For a listing of monsters by Challenge, consult the table on page 9.

MONSTERS BY CLASSIFICATION

CLASSIFICATION	CREATURE	CHALLENGE	PAGE
Artillery	Acidsap Gympie	15	89
Artillery	Adamant Diligence	28	226
Artillery	Champion of Pestilence	21	36
Artillery	Demidracolich	25	122
Artillery	Fell-ahng'el	18	116
Artillery	Ironthorn Snipeshrub	13	87
Artillery	Living Mage Tower	19	62
Artillery	Paramour Lich	23	119
Artillery	Rakshasa Haddiyon	17	219
Artillery	Utterance of Un-naming	14	236
Artillery	Wyrd Seer	19	242
Brute	Adult Brown Dragon	18	77
Brute	Ancient Brown Dragon	25	79
Brute	Brown Dragon Wyrmling	6	74
Brute	Champion of War	19	34
Brute	Drakopede	27	257
Brute	Drakuto	14	252
Brute	Earth Archon	18	95
Brute	Elder Strangler	18	158
Brute	Enokitake	5	102
Brute	Eternal Lich	30	127
Brute	Eyes That Bite	16	263
Brute	Fell-tormentão	16	111
Brute	Fire Archon	19	97
Brute	Gallium Goo	10	176
Brute	Hadala-Levinoss	14	132
Brute	Lynchwood	13	155
Brute	Maul Angelic	15	141
Brute	Octoshark	12	18
Brute	Ostoyae	16	105
Brute	Rakshasa Yoddha	15	217
Brute	Sharpythorapspidopustle	20	19
Brute	Slag Slime	18	181
Brute	Tyrannosaurus Rex of Legend	17	51
Brute	Young Brown Dragon	12	75
Controller	Ahd Moar	18	194
Controller	Champion of Famine	17	32
Controller	Ebon Pyromancer	17	191
Controller	Fell-murdona	15	109
Controller	Golden Emperor's Lyrebird	17	70

MONSTERS BY CLASSIFICATION

CLASSIFICATION	CREATURE	CHALLENGE	PAGE
Controller	Hadala-Lophi	12	130
Controller	Hadala-Medusae	18	135
Controller	Living Abjuration	11	23
Controller	Living Conjuration	11	23
Controller	Living Divination	11	24
Controller	Living Enchantment	11	24
Controller	Living Evocation	11	25
Controller	Living Illusion	11	27
Controller	Living Necromancy	11	25
Controller	Living Transmutation	11	26
Controller	Null Tide	14	261
Controller	Royal Crooning Spellwing	12	66
Controller	Sword-Billed Stone Singer	14	68
Controller	Tasey-Am	20	196
Controller	Utterance of Erudition	13	233
Elite	Adult Imperial Dragon	21	150
Elite	Ancient Imperial Dragon	27	152
Elite	Bloodbark Executioner	28	162
Elite	Brynhildr War Queen	24	245
Elite	Champion of Death	23	39
Elite	Lich Lord	27	124
Elite	Living Spellstorm	29	29
Elite	Primordial Ashcaller	26	207
Elite	Primordial Thunderking	22	204
Elite	Primordial Worldbreaker	30	211
Elite	Utterance of Damnation	12	229
Leader	River-Blessed	11	185
Leader	Sublime Chastity	14	222
Leader	Utterance of Blood	13	231

CLASSIFICATION	CREATURE	CHALLENGE	PAGE
Lurker	Adraknid	19	254
Lurker	Banded Agony Viper	10	41
Lurker	Burrowing Traproot	12	85
Lurker	Death Wrack	12	168
Lurker	Fell-ordalius	17	113
Lurker	Kingslayer Cobra	20	47
Lurker	Living Galleon	13	55
Lurker	Living Keep	16	58
Lurker	Mind Warper	14	170
Lurker	Rakshasa Andhere	14	215
Lurker	Soul Rot	18	173
Lurker	Tiger of Legend	10	52
Lurker	Twisting Hate	10	166
Skirmisher	Ancient Faerie Dragon	21	198
Skirmisher	Champion Fist	18	143
Skirmisher	Concert of Lost Souls	18	266
Skirmisher	Drakoptera	11	250
Skirmisher	Emerald Shadow Mamba	15	45
Skirmisher	Ferrophlegm	13	178
Skirmisher	Giant Elk of Legend	11	52
Skirmisher	Gracious Humility	19	224
Skirmisher	Lightning Archon	21	99
Skirmisher	Wandering Deathroller	10	81
Skirmisher	Wyrmling Imperial Dragon	8	147
Skirmisher	Young Imperial Dragon	15	148
Soldier	Fortress Divine	12	139
Soldier	Ice Archon	17	93
Soldier	Shield Maiden	17	240
Soldier	Sun-Cursed	13	188

MONSTERS THAT FAVOR

FAVORS	CREATURE	PAGE
Acid (Protection from)	Acidsap Gympie	89
Acid (Protection from)	Death Wrack	168
Antimagic	Golden Emperor's Lyrebird	70
Antimagic	Living Mage Tower	62
Antimagic	Primordial Ashcaller	207
Antimagic	Sword-Billed Stone Singer	68
Area-of-Effect	Concert of Lost Souls	266
Area-of-Effect	Lynchwood	155
Area-of-Effect	Primordial Thunderking	204
Area-of-Effect	River-Blessed	185
Area-of-Effect	Utterance of Damnation	229
Athletics (High)	Emerald Shadow Mamba	45
Attack Bonus (High)	Ahd Moar	194
Attack Bonus (High)	Brynhildr War Queen	245
Attacks (Magical Weapons)	Demidracolich	122
Attacks (Weapons)	Ahd Moar	194
Barbarians	Brynhildr War Queen	245
Barbarians	Burrowing Traproot	85
Barbarians	Champion Fist	143
Barbarians	Champion of Famine	32
Barbarians	Concert of Lost Souls	266
Barbarians	Death Wrack	168
Barbarians	Drakopede	257
Barbarians	Eyes That Bite	263
Barbarians	Ferrophlegm	178
Barbarians	Gracious Humility	224
Barbarians	Hadala-Lophi	130
Barbarians	Kingslayer Cobra	47
Barbarians	Lich Lord	124
Barbarians	Maul Angelic	141
Barbarians	Null Tide	261
Barbarians	Primordial Ashcaller	207
Barbarians	Primordial Worldbreaker	211
Barbarians	Rakshasa Andhere	215
Barbarians	Twisting Hate	166
Barbarians	Utterance of Un-naming	236
Barbarians	Young Brown Dragon	75
Bards	Ahd Moar	194
Bards	Bloodbark Executioner	162
Bards	Champion of Pestilence	36
Bards	Drakuto	252
Bards	Fell-ahng'el	116
Bards	Fell-ordalius	113
Bards	Gallium Goo	176
Bards	Golden Emperor's Lyrebird	70
Bards	Hadala-Levinoss	132
Bards	Lich Lord	124
Bards	Living Mage Tower	62
Bards	Living Spellstorm	29
Bards	Mind Warper	170
Bards	Paramour Lich	119
Bards	Primordial Ashcaller	207
Bards	Rakshasa Andhere	215
Bards	Royal Crooning Spellwing	66
Bards	Sublime Chastity	222
Bards	Sun-Cursed	188
Bards	Sword-Billed Stone Singer	68
Bards	Tyrannosaurus Rex of Legend	51
Blindsight	Rakshasa Andhere	215
Charisma (High)	Drakuto	252
Charisma (High)	Golden Emperor's Lyrebird	70
Charisma (High)	Sublime Chastity	222
Charisma (High)	Tyrannosaurus Rex of Legend	51
Charmed (Protection from)	Ancient Faerie Dragon	198
Charmed (Protection from)	Fell-murdona	109
Charmed (Protection from)	Hadala-Lophi	130
Charmed (Protection from)	Royal Crooning Spellwing	66
Clerics	Ancient Faerie Dragon	198
Clerics	Champion of Death	39
Clerics	Champion of Famine	32
Clerics	Champion of Pestilence	36
Clerics	Drakopede	257
Clerics	Drakoptera	250
Clerics	Emerald Shadow Mamba	45
Clerics	Fell-ahng'el	116
Clerics	Fell-murdona	109
Clerics	Fell-ordalius	113
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Clerics	Lich Lord	124
Clerics	Living Keep	58
Clerics	Living Transmutation	26
Clerics	Mind Warper	170
Clerics	Paramour Lich	119
Clerics	Rakshasa Andhere	215

MONSTERS THAT FAVOR

FAVORS	CREATURE	PAGE
Clerics	Royal Crooning Spellwing	66
Clerics	Sharpythorapspidopustle	19
Clerics	Shield Maiden	240
Clerics	Soul Rot	173
Clerics	Sword-Billed Stone Singer	68
Clerics	Tasey-Am	196
Clerics	Twisting Hate	166
Clerics	Utterance of Blood	231
Clerics	Utterance of Damnation	229
Clerics	Utterance of Erudition	233
Clerics	Wyrd Seer	242
Constitution (High)	Champion Fist	143
Constitution (High)	Champion of Famine	32
Constitution (High)	Champion of Pestilence	36
Constitution (High)	Death Wrack	168
Constitution (High)	Ebon Pyromancer	191
Constitution (High)	Ferrophlegm	178
Constitution (High)	Kingslayer Cobra	47
Constitution (High)	Sword-Billed Stone Singer	68
Constitution (High)	Tasey-Am	196
Constitution (High)	Twisting Hate	166
Constitution (Targeting)	Hadala-Medusae	135
Damage (Physical)	Brynhildr War Queen	245
Damage (Physical)	Utterance of Un-naming	236
Damage (Single-Target)	Primordial Worldbreaker	211
Damage (Variety)	Young Brown Dragon	75
Dexterity (High)	Champion of War	34
Dexterity (High)	Drakuto	252
Dexterity (High)	Fire Archon	97
Dexterity (High)	Hadala-Levinoss	132
Dexterity (High)	Living Galleon	55
Dexterity (Targeting)	Fortress Divine	139
Dexterity (Targeting)	Gracious Humility	224
Dexterity (Targeting)	Ostoyae	105
Dexterity (Targeting)	Sublime Chastity	222
Disabling	Shield Maiden	240
Disabling	Sun-Cursed	188
Disease (Protection from)	Death Wrack	168
Disease (Protection from)	Mind Warper	170
Disease (Protection from)	Soul Rot	173
Disease (Protection from)	Twisting Hate	166
Disease (Protection from)	Utterance of Blood	231

FAVORS	CREATURE	PAGE
Druids	Acidsap Gympie	89
Druids	Adraknid	254
Druids	Banded Agony Viper	41
Druids	Champion of Famine	32
Druids	Drakopede	257
Druids	Drakuto	252
Druids	Elder Strangler	158
Druids	Emerald Shadow Mamba	45
Druids	Fell-tormentão	111
Druids	Gallium Goo	176
Druids	Golden Emperor's Lyrebird	70
Druids	Hadala-Levinoss	132
Druids	Hadala-Lophi	130
Druids	Ice Archon	93
Druids	Ironthorn Snipeshrub	87
Druids	Kingslayer Cobra	47
Druids	Lightning Archon	99
Druids	Lynchwood	155
Druids	Ostoyae	105
Druids	Primordial Thunderking	204
Druids	River-Blessed	185
Druids	Royal Crooning Spellwing	66
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