13TH AGE™

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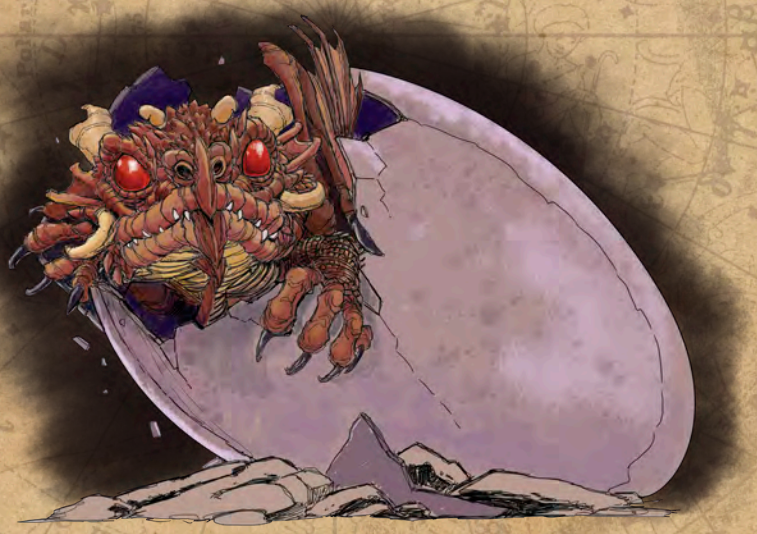

13TH AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY
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Pelgrane Press

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www.fireopalmedia.com and **www.pelgranepress.com**
First printing. Printed by Taylor Specialty Books, Texas, USA.

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Introduction

Roar!

This is a book of monsters. And a book of rivals. And a book of tactics, and political entanglements, and scenery, and rich opportunities for roleplaying and storytelling. In earlier Ages, bestiaries described not just the strange creatures of far-off lands, but the roles they played in divine creation and magical communication. This ***Bestiary*** takes those classic texts as models, and goes even farther into the woods with them.

Each of the 52 monsters in this book – four times our iconic number 13, if you're wondering – likewise goes farther. The monsters here are not tied to one image, to one value, or even to one icon. They range all along the scale, variations and versions and possible inversions, nastier attacks and new powers, different roles in a fight or in their warband. There are, by one count at least, not 52 monsters in this ***Bestiary*** but 202 monster variants, each of those one possibility picked out of the thousands of potential creations visible in the shadow of the textual trees.

With so many variations, every encounter can be individual, crafted for your players or enjoyed in the spirit of true adventure and the unknown that lies at the heart of fantasy. Making new monsters in *13th Age* is easy enough – see page 228 for just how easy it can be. What we've done here is to make old monsters new again, by looking not just at their tactics or their treasures (although we definitely do both) but at the ways to change the creatures, to see them in a different perspective and from a new angle. Why shouldn't kobolds be trap-laying ninjas? Why can't manticores be ant-lions, too? What haunts a red dragon's treasure? And we've made plenty of new monsters, too: haunted skulls and warbanners, wibbles and zorigami.

The core of each monster entry is its relationships with the Icons, because that's the core of anything smart enough to feed itself in the 13th Age. We don't define anything exclusively: not all orcs serve the Orc Lord, not all colored dragons venerate the Three, and even the drow keep their options open, though they wouldn't dream of betraying the Elf Queen, of course not. The same is true on the other side of the glass. Suspicious voices show up in blurbs for each beast, each voice giving one possible Iconic viewpoint of the creature, but each so clearly working with only part of the truth that your own views emerge in chorus and contradiction.

So the creatures here have variety, and motives, and iconic headaches just like the characters. They are tied into the setting, and in some cases – the sahuagin, say, or the frost giants – almost seem to embody it. What about the plot? Each entry has a number of adventure hooks, of course, each of them enough to drive a story or two. But by looking at a monster from many directions, by hooking in not just adventure ideas but iconic politics and the possibilities of change and growth inherent in those multiple levels and types, each beast potentially becomes a campaign in itself.

This, of course, is where you come in. You may just want to use the couatl as a one-off piece of color after watching *Q* on Netflix. Or you may want to drive the whole campaign toward the questions the winged serpents pose by their very existence, and in their their own peculiar iconic idiom. Or your players may find their one-off encounter with a couatl more compelling than you anticipated, and head down that campaign trail themselves.

This book surveys that trail, and gives you a dozen nagas and centaurs to distract your players with while you figure out just where it might go next.

Welcome to the jungle.

Stories

The *Bestiary* is one more element to add to your collaborative campaign-creation process. Don't think of the source material in our books as perfectly cast pottery that's meant to be filled up with your campaign ideas—think of our source material as colorful modeling clay you can shape into anything you like. Sometimes you'll like our ideas well enough to use them, but the rest of the time you and your players should surprise each other.

That's why many of the *Bestiary* entries acknowledge variants and options. Other entries that sound as if they're saying "this is the way it is" should be as open to revision as everything else in our half-finished setting.

Odd Monster Lists

Yeah, you need to know monster levels and roles, and we've a table for that starting on page 234 in the appendix. Here are a few less common lists you may find useful.

Monsters that might negotiate or invoke a treaty

Drow: So many treaties, so many deniable betrayals. (page 57)

Lich: They take their Undying Peerage quite seriously. If you want to survive contact with a powerful lich, you should take it seriously also. (page 134)

Manticore: Ancient treaties that everyone has forgotten? Perhaps the manticores aren't entirely clear on the details either. (page 138)

Lammasu: If heaven had lawyers, it would be these human-headed bulls. (page 130)

Blue Sorcerer: Drakkenhall has treaties left over from when it was still High Rock, plus new treaties of its own. (page 21)

Monsters that might take you for ransom rather than just kill you

Centaur: Centaurs demand ransoms involving travel and looting in underworld locations they are not comfortable in. So long as they get what they want, being held hostage isn't all that bad. (page 34)

Naga: The naga, on the other hand, are the worst captors. Not because they're necessarily cruel. They just don't really notice your fleshy biological problems. Like food or water. (page 142)

Red dragons: If you ask the Red himself, some of the lesser red dragons have taken this fascination with their treasure hoards way too far. But there it is. Giving red dragons treasure they couldn't have easily taken might just save your life for a short while. (page 167)

Redcaps: Haha! Just kidding. They'd pretend they were holding you for ransom and then torture and kill you while making you wonder why they weren't keeping you alive for the ransom. (page 174)

Monsters that lay fearsome eggs

Red dragon: You want to live forever? No. Good! Go find some red dragon eggs. (page 167)

Bulette: They probably lay eggs, right? I mean, I guess they may not. Find out. (page 27)

Tarrasque: Probably somewhere out there on the bottom of the Iron Sea. No pressure. (page 200)

Naga: Per the naga's lifecycle (see page 142), it's said that the naga's eggs are even bigger than the adult naga. The speaker usually hits you with a wooden enlightenment baton immediately afterward. (page 142)

Kobold: Oh sorry, we said fearsome eggs. Never mind. (page 123)

Monsters that live deep within the magical space owned by the icons

Chimera, Iconic: They're reactive rather than active players in the world, but they are tuned to the power of the icons in ways that arcane scholars would love to understand.

Couatl: Impossible beasts that muck with the definitions of the world as we know it. That's the overworld for you. (page 52)

Monsters more likely than not to populate living dungeons

Gelahedrons: Living dungeons—goofiness that kills. (page 88)

Chaos Beast: Chaos is where they live. (page 38)

Rust monster: Man, living dungeons sound like so much fun. (page 183)

Haunted skull: There's a minimalist style to the haunted skull. Who needs the full skeleton? Bring on the skull. (page 108)

Monsters that cloak themselves in lies

Ettercap: Masters of secrets *and* disinformation. (page 72)

Drow: They're probably not guilty of everything they're accused of. Half or double, flip a coin. (page 57)

Shadow dragon: Attracting attention from powerful but not too-powerful people is a delicate lifestyle. (page 192)

Intellect Devourer: Sometimes they go so deep they end up fighting on the side of the people they once upon a time looked at as food. (page 115)

Whispering Prophet: The lies work out so well for everyone, at first. (page 215)

Monsters that have been less monstrous in at least one previous age

Ogre mage: The details are shadowy, but they certainly worked for the Empire a few ages ago. We're not saying that means the Empire was doing the work of good at that point . . . (page 151)

Warbanner: They probably started their military career as a respectable weapon lauded for saving lives. Yeah. (page 206)

White dragon: Well, this is a cruel cut, but in the old days white dragons were truly fearsome and you certainly weren't going to find the toughest examples of the species acting as graveyard enforcers to get back at the Lich King. (page 218)

Monsters voted mostly likely to have slain an icon

Tarrasque: We're guessing it happened, at least once upon a time. (page 200)

Lich: Sort of depends on how you think about it. (page 134)

Zorigami: Details lost in time. (page 224)

Building Battles: Basic Considerations

The roles we assign to monsters are often somewhat rough but to build fun battles you only need a rough guide.

Here's the rule of thumb we somehow left out of the core book: when you're putting together a battle, it will usually be more fun if you use monsters from two or three different roles. In other words, if you're going to make the battle interesting by using multiple different types of monsters, choose them from different roles.

It's not necessarily even all that important which roles you choose, so long as they are different. Bad encounters are a lot more likely if all the monsters come from the same role. A battle with all wreckers could be swingy, a wipe-out either way. A battle with all casters means the casters won't have much protection. A battle against nothing but spoilers may be a grind. A battle with all troops could be too vanilla, unless they're troops whose special abilities work well together.

The other factors to consider include ranged attacks, the player character group dynamics, and complexity load.

Ranged attacks: We're not talking only about ranged attacks here—what's most important is some ability to attack creatures that are nearby or far away rather than only having monsters that attack when engaged. A battle with monsters that only have melee attacks may take the pressure off the PCs. The characters will be able to hide behind their friends a lot easier. There are a few monsters that teleport or use other tricks to evade engagement (cambion assassins in this book, for example), but be aware that monsters with some discretion in choosing their targets, or sheer randomness, can put pressure on groups that have excellent teamwork.

Group dynamics: I'm going to give one example to illustrate a complex situation I haven't taken the time to fully understand. When my home table is at full strength, the group has three PCs with decent healing abilities. The result is that battles that don't have wreckers are more easily dealt with than I think they would be in other groups. Either I need to use wreckers to do damage in a hurry or use spoilers or casters to put the group into situations they didn't expect.

Complexity load: Running one ogre mage at a time is plenty; use less-complicated monsters when one of the monsters/monster groups is on the complex end of the scale.

Running five or six different monsters is perfectly possible, it just requires a lot of cross-checking between different stat blocks. Personally I run more battles like this than is entirely reasonable, partly because I enjoy seeing the interactions between diverse monsters and partly because I enjoy stories in which monster groups end up as diverse and weird as the player characters.

If you're into this approach, the basic simplicity of *13th Age* helps. Help yourself by getting players to help you track initiative and do other record keeping.

Standard and Unique Battles

You'll see that every entry has a Building Battles section that details some of the most likely allies and minions that make game world sense for the monster. Obviously "the most likely encounters" isn't what *13th Age* is always about, but we suspect it's best to let most monster battles stick close to a baseline, to "traditional" fantasy battles that seem normal, in which hobgoblins team up with goblins, kobolds serve blue dragon sorcerers, and fire giants sic their hellhounds on your tail.

But of course there's a place for exceptions to the most likely suggestions. Just as unique associations of diverse player characters form adventuring parties, unusual groups of monsters can create unique battles, gangs, or incidents that aren't likely to be repeated.

Since the building battles sections don't talk much about building unusual battles, we're calling out a few reasonable ways of creating unique battles below.

The power-blocks represented by the thirteen icons can generate strange temporary allegiances between rivals who have an enemy in common. The PCs may or may not immediately understand why there's a lammasu helping the medusa outlaw they've been tracking, but even if clues aren't immediately apparent, the icon relationships rules give you latitude to explain unlikely alliances some point later during the campaign when you're certain that revealing the mystery will be cool.

Monster personalities include freaks and deviants. We didn't want to clutter up all the adventure hooks by talking about deviants like the frost giant adventurer who rebelled against his clan by becoming the bodyguard of a lich, but hey, he's right over there. And he's huge. Again, the point of your campaign isn't usually being set by monster personalities, so be prepared to have the PCs casually slay a monster before you've been able to reveal the true extent of its twisted allegiances. But remember that all actions *can* have consequences, even monster slaying, so if there's a mystery you're dying to express, you can always follow up with related monsters seeking revenge.

Other monsters might be thrown into temporary alliances by virtue of **a single commonality**, a trait that would ordinarily seem trivial or irrelevant but has somehow become the basis of an unlikely alliance. Use the list of curious monster tendencies above as a starting point if you like.

You don't necessarily have to think of these monster groupings on a by-the-battle basis. It might be better to think of them as associated battles that might end up running together for reasons connected to the story of what's going on with the monsters.

For example, take the list monsters that lay dangerous eggs. An ongoing struggle between a bulette and a red dragon over prime egg-laying territory could turn into de facto cooperation in which the bulette guards earth approaches to the nesting area and the dragon guards the aerial approaches. The world of *13th Age* is open to monsters that act with a bit more independent thinking than their nature ordinarily suggests, as long as they're using their independent thought for *evil*.

Living dungeons twist reality into forms that make zero sense when exposed to the cutting light of the Empire's magic. But someone has to go down and deliver the Empire's gospel. Until the news from the surface arrives, redcaps might serve as guardsmen and executioners in a subterranean court ruled by a fungaloid empress.

Basilisk

It's easy to know when a basilisk is nearby—everything is dead.

Legendary Threats

Basilisks are horrid serpentine creatures that kill everything around them. Black basilisks, which petrify the hapless and unlucky, are the most common type, but there is a type aligned with each element.

Basilisk

This giant, crested serpent has eight legs, and each scale drips with a myriad of deadly poisons. Just looking at a basilisk is enough to kill someone who isn't accustomed to dealing with deadly magic.

Large 4th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +3

Multi-legged attack +8 vs. AC (3 attacks, each against a different enemy)—12 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 5 ongoing poison damage.

Basilisk's stare: When a basilisk hits an enemy that is already taking ongoing poison damage, the basilisk can make a *basilisk's stare* attack against the target as a free action.
[Special trigger] **C: Basilisk's stare +8 vs. MD**—5 ongoing poison damage, and the target must start making last gasp saves depending on the basilisk's type (see below) as it accidentally takes a full look at the basilisk. Constructs and undead are immune to this effect.

Last Gasp Failed Save Effects

Green Basilisk
Failed save: The target takes 25 poison damage as its blood turns to poison.
Fourth failed save: The target's body liquefies and they die.

Red Basilisk
Failed save: The target takes 15 fire damage, and each of the target's nearby allies takes 5 fire damage as the target's blood boils under their skin and sprays outward in gouts of liquid fire.
Fourth failed save: The target's body ignites as their flaming skull shoots upward on a jet of burning blood, killing them.

Black Basilisk
Failed save: The target's blood begins to coagulate and harden, and dust puffs out of their lungs through their mouth.
Fourth failed save: The target's body turns to stone and they die.

White Basilisk
Failed save: The target begins to evaporate. The target must make an immediate normal save (11+) or it loses a chunk of flesh or a limb, whatever is dramatic but will allow the creature to survive (perhaps with minuses until healed).
Fourth failed save: The target's body explodes into a fine red mist and they die.

Resist melee damage 18+: When a melee attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. An attacker can ignore this resistance by declaring they are looking directly at the basilisk during the attack. If they do, the basilisk can make a *basilisk's stare* attack against them as a free action before the attack. Constructs and undead are not affected by this resistance.

Stare-down: When an enemy makes a ranged attack against the basilisk, the basilisk can make a *basilisk's stare* attack against them as a free action before the attack.

Nastier Specials

Death breath: Each creature engaged with the basilisk at the end of the basilisk's turn takes 10 poison damage.

AC	**24**	
PD	19	**HP 85**
MD	18	

Nastier Specials for Legendary Dangers

If the basilisk is a more-or-less normal but deadly monster in your campaign, don't use the nasty ideas in this sidebar. Consider using them if your campaign's basilisk is a major story event or a legendary creature on par with the greatest dragons. If the basilisk is indeed a legendary creature, then go all out to describe the blasted, poisoned land around its lair—give the players some warning that this monster is extraordinary and far more dangerous than other monsters.

If looks could kill: When a creature attacks the basilisk and gets a natural attack roll that is higher than their Wisdom score, they have unwisely looked at the basilisk and must start making last gasp saves for that type of basilisk.

Lingering look: Ending the battle doesn't end the need to make last gasp saves caused by the basilisk.

Look at me: When the basilisk misses with an attack and the natural roll is odd, it chooses one nearby enemy. That enemy takes a –2 penalty to last gasp saves until the end of the battle.

Building Battles

Basilisks don't work with other creatures, although they may take advantage of being near another monster's hunting grounds or lair (like adventurers flocking to a dragon's den). Usually, it's the other way around. Other monsters find ways to trap and control a basilisk to protect their lair or to use against their enemies. If the food is steady, the basilisks will often go along with this arrangement . . . for a while. Since dead creatures aren't affected by a basilisk's gaze, many intelligent undead servants of the Lich King such as vampires, liches, and wights will keep a basilisk around to cause trouble for enemies who think they are only fighting undead.

Another favorite tactic of evil spellcasters who can capture basilisks using magic is to team them with constructs to defend the caster's sanctum. While the intruders are shutting their eyes against the basilisk, the caster's golems or gargoyles can tear them to pieces without being affected themselves.

Avoiding Seeing the Basilisk

Wise adventurers and clever players will think up ways to mitigate a basilisk's stare.

Won't look: The rules for the basilisk already assume that characters aren't looking at the basilisk. When they do, there's a price to pay.

Can't look: A character might try wearing a blindfold or using some other method to prevent them from looking at the basilisk accidentally. This negates the *basilisk's stare* ability but that character has a 50% miss chance with any attack (make the check before the attack roll). If a deliberately blinded ranged attacker misses with an attack and rolls a natural 1–5, they fumble and risk hitting one of their allies engaged with the basilisk, as per the Shooting into Melee rules.

Kind of looking: Characters might have crazy methods for looking at the basilisk indirectly such as a mirrored shield, a polished blade, a spell, or looking through the eyes of a familiar. Such characters take a –2 penalty to their attacks and if they are forced to make last gasp saves for the basilisk, the final death effect occurs after the fifth failed save instead of the fourth. Reward cleverness.

Doesn't affect me: Constructs such as forgeborn and undead are unaffected by seeing a basilisk. Some characters might have unique things that could prevent the basilisk's gaze from working, such as a bat-elf that sees through sonar, a dwarf that has unusual magical senses but no eyes, or a wizard that perceives through psychic emanations. In general allow them to be immune to the basilisk's stare.

Basilisks and NPCs

Basilisks are bad news if you happen to be a hapless villager or other low-level NPC. You could either give basilisks this ability:

Petrify the herd: As a free action at the start of each of its turns, the basilisk makes a basilisk's stare attack against each nearby NPC.

Or you could handwave the dice rolls away entirely for nameless NPCs and post-battle describe the petrified, exploded, evaporated, or dissolved villagers surrounding the basilisk's path of destruction.

Basilisks and the Icons

"A basilisk!? No, I don't care what you are paying, I'm not going. Here, take your money back!" —Rattigus the Brave, champion of one hundred combats, three times winner of the Axis Games, and former dragon-wrangler

Basilisks are untamable, but their stares do not affect undead or constructs. As such the Lich King has brought many basilisks to the Necropolis to serve as guardians of important tombs that he has stuffed full of skeletons. The Archmage has done something similar at some sites important to him, but using constructs instead of undead. Strangely, medusa and basilisks are quite capable of coexisting without destroying each other, mutually immune to each other's stare. Although the Elf Queen may sometimes work with medusa nobles, she hates basilisks with a deep and abiding passion, as does the High Druid, the Priestess, and the Blue (the Three).

Things Found in Basilisk Territory

A deserted cart. Poison dripping from dead trees. Shed basilisk skin. Empty clothes, ripped apart from the inside as though by an explosion. Scorched earth. Birds dropping from the sky. Burning smells. Cracked mirrors. Stagnant water. Melted swords. Bent armor. Corpses. Very realistic statues.

Basilisk Environmental Effects: Poisoned Terrain

A basilisk poisons the air, stagnates water just by looking at it, causes nearby rainfall to become toxic as it falls, and makes plants weep poisons and die. Tracking a basilisk is not that hard of a task—just follow the trail of death.

- In poisoned terrain where a basilisk has passed by in the last month, each character spending a recovery while resting only heals the minimum that their recovery dice would produce.
- If the basilisk frequents the area, no character can heal by taking a quick rest there.
- If the area is the basilisk's lair, no character can heal through non-magical means (such as rallying or quick rests).

Each type of poisoned terrain also has other adverse effects depending upon the type of basilisk in the area:

Green: *Miasma*—The very air is poisonous with a thick miasma that burns the lungs. Each time a character fails a skill check in the area, they take 5 poison damage.

Red: *Scorched Earth*—The grass is tinder-dry and even the soil burns. Any fires in the area have a 50% chance of burning out of control.

Black: *Garden of Statues*—The area is full of petrified trees and animals that have been turned to stone. While in the area, supplies spoil as they transmute into clay.

White: *An Ill Wind Blows No Good*—The wind carries sounds of pain, as though it were itself composed of tortured creatures. It is impossible to take a full heal-up in the area.

Adventure Hooks

Milk Me a Basilisk—Somebody in Shadow Port is buying a lot of poisons, the more exotic the better. A trader knows where a basilisk might be found and offers a cut of the profits if the adventurers can bring back basilisk poison glands intact. Of course, that means killing a basilisk, but with the way that the price of poison is going up, the payday will be huge if the party can do the job.

The Basilisk and the Basilica—A cleric of an obscure but wealthy sect has received a vision that a new temple must be built in an area of wilderness. Unfortunately the area is said to be haunted, so the adventurers are hired to clear out the ghosts. When the adventurers draw near, they discover that the cleric heard wrong—it's a basilisk's territory.

Weapon of Mass Destruction—The Diabolist has somehow captured and drugged a basilisk and sent it in a covered wagon to Axis. The adventurers learn of the plot from letters carried by a would-be assassin. Can the adventurers convince the authorities to evacuate the city, or will they have to race against the clock to find and kill the basilisk before it awakes?

BAT

If player characters were a superstitious and cowardly lot, bats might be a threat. But c'mon! They're heroes!

Just the Bats

We could spend some time talking about the horrid festering bat caves of the underworld, the dreadful piteous cries of the peasants who fall prey to goblin bat cavalry raids, and the black clouds of wraith bats that sometimes spiral out of the Necropolis. And oh look, we just did!

Seriously, you know bats as well as we do. Use them when you want a monster that scares normal citizens but isn't that frightening to seasoned adventurers. Then surprise the PCs with creatures like the thunder bat and the wraith bat.

Bat Abilities

Unless you have bizarre plans for wingless bats, legless bats, or bats that operate using different physics, all bats have the following abilities unless otherwise noted.

Echolocation: Bats rely on sound waves to sense their surroundings. A bat can "see" in total darkness, and can detect creatures using invisibility or visual illusions to hide.

Flight: Small bats fly quickly and turn easily. Bigger bats, the kind that you're fighting in dungeons, fly more awkwardly.

Wall-crawler: A bat can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

Swarming Critters

Note that the swarm of bats is using odd game mechanics to evoke a sense that it isn't physically present in one spot the way most creatures are. There's a swarm of bats zooming around the battle and not everyone is threatened by it or has a clear shot at it each round.

Swarm of Bats

What is at first a slightly painful distraction could turn lethal as the bats shift and flow to evade your attacks.

1st level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +5
Vulnerability: thunder

C: Swarming bites +7 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—2 damage, and after the attack, the swarm of bats engages one of the targets

Natural even hit: The target is hampered until the end of its next turn. It can end the effect by attacking the swarm, or if the swarm drops to 0 hp.

No opportunities: The swarm of bats can't make opportunity attacks, and enemies can't make opportunity attacks against it.

Swarming resistance: Each turn, the swarm of bats gains *resist damage 18+* to all damage from attacks by enemies that the swarm did NOT attack that turn.

AC	**16**	
PD	16	**HP 30**
MD	11	

Dire Bat

Some people call them dire vampire bats, but that gets confusing when people expect them to function like scary vampires instead of just overgrown flying rodents with rabid tendencies.

2nd level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +8
Vulnerability: thunder

Fangs and wings +6 vs. AC—5 damage, and 5 ongoing damage
Natural 2–5: The dire bat pops free from the target and can move as a free action.

Resist ranged damage 16+: When a ranged attack targets this creature while it's flying, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. (Shifty spinning bats are hard to hit unless they're grounded or stuck.)

Skittish: A dire bat engaged with a conscious enemy after attacking it will attempt to disengage and fly into the air if it has a move action remaining that turn.

Nastier Specials
Blood drinker: When the dire bat drops an enemy to 0 hp or below, it continues to attack that enemy (until it dies) instead of attacking other enemies.
Dire feature: Most dire bats don't have a dire feature (*13th Age* core book, page 206). But this one does.

AC	**18**	
PD	17	**HP 32**
MD	14	

Bat Cavalry

One goblin warrior, one dire bat. Two bad little things that go great together.

Large 2nd level wrecker [BEAST & HUMANOID]
Initiative: +6
Vulnerability: thunder

Fangs, wings, and sword +8 vs. AC—Damage and effect depends on the natural roll
Natural even hit: The target takes 10 damage from a sword strike, and the bat cavalry pops free from the target and can move as a free action.
Natural even miss against a target taking ongoing damage: The target takes 6 damage from clawing wings.
Natural odd hit: The target takes 8 damage, and 5 ongoing damage from bat fangs.
Natural 2–5: In addition to any other effect, the bat cavalry pops free from the target, and as a free action, it can move to another nearby enemy and make a *fangs, wings, and sword* attack against it.

R: Thrown javelin +5 vs. AC—8 damage

Resist ranged damage 16+: When a ranged attack targets this creature while it's flying, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. (Shifty spinning bats are hard to hit unless they're grounded or stuck.)

Skittish: A bat cavalry engaged with a conscious enemy after attacking it will attempt to disengage and fly into the air if it has a move action remaining that turn.

Nastier Specials
Blood drinker: When the bat cavalry drops an enemy to 0 hp or below, it continues to attack that enemy (until it dies) instead of attacking other enemies.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 70**
MD	14	

Goblin Bat Mage

Learning to ride a flying bat left this runty goblin with just enough time to learn one nasty little spell.

3rd level spoiler [BEAST & HUMANOID]
Initiative: +7
Vulnerability: thunder

Bloody fangs +7 vs. AC—6 damage, and 6 ongoing damage
Natural 2–5: The goblin bat mage pops free from the target and can move as a free action.

R: Blood bolt spell +7 vs. PD—8 negative energy damage
Natural even hit: If target is staggered after taking the damage, it's also hampered until the end of its next turn.
Natural odd hit: One random nearby ally of the target takes 2d6 negative energy damage.

Resist ranged damage 16+: When a ranged attack targets this creature while it's flying, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. (Shifty spinning bats are hard to hit unless they're grounded or stuck.)

Skittish: A goblin bat mage engaged with a conscious enemy after attacking it will attempt to disengage and fly into the air if it has a move action remaining that turn.

Unwieldy flyer: When the goblin bat mage is staggered, it must roll an immediate save. On a failure, it loses its ability to fly until the end of its next turn. If flying near the ground, it lands immediately. If flying far away from the ground, it lands badly and takes 15 damage.

AC	**19**	
PD	16	**HP 44**
MD	16	

Thunder Bat

It likes its meat tender. Luckily it carries a sonic tenderizer in its throat.

5th level archer [BEAST]
Initiative: +13

Fangs +10 vs. AC—15 damage
Natural even hit against a dazed enemy: The target takes 20 ongoing thunder damage.

C: Thunder screech +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby creatures in a group)—12 thunder damage
Natural even hit: The target is dazed (save ends).

Resist ranged damage 16+: When a ranged attack targets this creature while it's flying, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. (Shifty spinning bats are hard to hit unless they're grounded or stuck.)

Resist thunder 18+: When a thunder attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage. Unlike most bats, this one dispenses thunder rather than fearing it.

Unwieldy flyer: When the thunder bat is staggered, it must roll an immediate save. On a failure, it loses its ability to fly until the end of its next turn. If flying near the ground, it lands immediately. If flying far away from the ground, it lands badly and takes 25 damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	18	**HP 70**
MD	15	

Wraith Bat

Living people call them wraith bats because they're clearly ghosts. Undead "people" call them the vampires' bats *because they usually serve vampires, not wraiths.*

9th level mook [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +14

Ghostly fangs +14 vs. PD—25 negative energy damage, and the target takes +1d8 negative energy damage for each relationship point it has with the Lich King

C: Spiraling assault +14 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—22 negative energy damage, and after the attack the wraith bat teleports to and engages with one target it hit.
Limited use: Regardless of the number of wraith bats in the battle, only one wraith bat can use this attack each round.

Ghostly: This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage except force damage, which damages it normally. A wraith bat can move through solid objects but it can't end its movement inside them.

AC	**24**	
PD	23	**HP 36 (mook)**
MD	20	

Mook: Kill one wraith bat mook for every 36 damage you deal to the mob.

"It's not the bats that are the trouble. It's the stream of idiot goblins that stalk the caves and tunnels trying to capture and tame the bats. If you thought goblin smelled bad on the outside, try sniffing goblin after it's passed through the innards of a bat."

—Brunder, dwarf tunnel scout

Building Battles

The swarm of bats and dire bats work best as an additive to combat with other creatures. Perhaps the PCs stumble across a swarm and begin fighting it, only to draw the attention of some nearby goblins. A dire bat could prove challenging if, a few rounds into a battle with gnolls or orcs or undead, it enters the fray and picks a squishy looking hero who's staying on the outskirts of the fight.

Bat cavalry and goblin bat mages fight with goblins, obviously, but a bat mage leading a few pet swarms of bats or a bat cavalry overflying a pack of goblin wolf-riders on a raid works too. And you can change out the goblin component too. Perhaps some kobolds, seeing the goblins on bats, decide to try it using alchemical bombs from above. Since the bats aren't the strongest of fliers, it's probably best to use humanoid riders of the small variety.

Thunder bats tend to operate alone or with their own kind, but an enterprising spellcaster or creature with thunder and/or lightning powers might keep one around as a pet. Wraith bats and undead go hand-in-hand. Vampires enjoy keeping a colony of the creatures nearby as guardians to give them time to prepare for pesky adventurers who want to put an end to the vampires.

Bats and the Icons

Dire bats are often associated with villainous icons and other villains, partly because they make civilized people nervous and partly because goblins are the only creatures that have consistently managed to domesticate and ride them. To hear halflings tell it, they could duplicate the goblins' feat if they wanted to. To hear gnomes tell it, riding a bat is a disgusting experience.

Archmage: Thunder bats are a huge nuisance in the lower overworld, nesting in the bottom of flying realms that aren't carefully maintained. The Archmage probably doesn't even recognize the problem, but his servants and followers do.

High Druid: Dire bats without goblin taint are like any other animal to the High Druid: naturally wild, occasionally good company, worth talking to, and occasionally a lethal nuisance.

Lich King: Wraith bats are serviceable adjuncts for some of his finest lieutenants. You'd think he might also be interested in skeletal bats and zombie bats, but that's usually not the case since skeletal and zombified versions of the creatures fly poorly (if at all) and navigate worse.

Orc Lord: It's not lost on the Orc Lord that goblins on bats get uppity and occasionally forget who is boss.

Black Dragon

Older is not always wiser. Sometimes older is just meaner.

Primordial Rulers of the World

The black dragons claim to be the firstborn among the chromatics. According to their own history, they were born directly of the primary creative forces of the universe—the raw potential of the primordial chaos, the nurturing depths of the seas, the immense strength of the land, and the omnipresent magic of the stars. The black dragons thought themselves the unique, powerful rulers of the world.

The world was not content to simply be ruled, however, and created dragons of its own. Through the secondary creative forces—fire, water, air, and earth—more dragons came into being that challenged the power of the originals. In time, the young siblings of the quickly expanding dragon family broke the black dragon dominance, leading to the draconic free-for-all that carries forward even to this day. The black dragons have never forgiven "those pretenders" for their offense and each new generation continues to carry forward the grudge of ten thousand years.

The black dragons described in the core rulebook have interbred and ignored their blood connection to their unique, pre-elemental creative roots. They combine some of the qualities of each black dragon origin. The dragons described here have maintained those blood connections through selective mating and ritual, and so exhibit thematic qualities specific to their origins.

Dragon Abilities

All dragons have the *escalator* and *flight* abilities (see below). They also have one (or sometimes two) random dragon abilities. See page 233 for how to determine a dragon's random dragon ability or abilities, and for the ability list.

Escalator: A dragon adds the escalation die to its attack rolls.

Flight: A dragon flies reasonably well, powerful and fast in a straight line though not as maneuverable as more agile flyers.

Catacomb Dragon

Catacomb dragons inhabit deep subterranean lairs near large veins of ores and precious stones. They have no use for the materials themselves, but viciously protect the veins from dwarves and dark elves. Catacomb dragons will even go so far as to seal themselves inside their lairs for months—even years—to ensure the underworld denizens are denied resources. The dragons' immense strength and their acidic skin and breath allow them to escape these cave-ins with ease when the time is right.

Each catacomb dragon has a pearlescent geode. The crystals within the geode are said to contain the power to aggravate volcanic eruptions. The geode can be used only once so provoking a catacomb dragon into doing so means putting it into a situation from which it can't escape. It's no small feat, but both dwarven and dark elf histories recall stories where one or another ruler did so to win a war with surface-dwellers.

Large 3rd level wrecker [DRAGON]
Initiative: +9
Vulnerability: thunder

Acid fangs +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)—8 damage, and 5 ongoing acid damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The dragon regains the use of its *caustic breath* if it's expended and can use it during its next turn.

C: Caustic breath +7 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10 acid damage, 5 ongoing acid damage, and the target is caught in an acidic haze (see below) with an effect that depends on the roll
Even hit: While in the haze, the target is dazed from choking or blinding.
Odd hit: While in the haze, the target takes a –5 penalty to all saves against acid damage.
Miss: 5 ongoing acid damage.
Acidic haze: The haze is magical, semi-aware, and remains around the target until the end of the battle or until removed magically. A spellcaster can cast a spell that targets AC or PD to attack the haze and destroy it—the haze has 1 HP and an AC/PD of 22. The GM is encouraged to play fast and loose with physics here: the mist can be burned, condensed/frozen, blown away, absorbed, transmuted, etc. At the GM's discretion, there may be physical ways to remove the haze, but it should require a hard DC.
Limited use: 1/battle, as a quick action.

All-terrain terror: A catacomb dragon flies reasonably well, powerful and fast in a straight line though it's not as maneuverable as more agile flyers. It can also burrow quickly and effectively due to the acidic coating on its skin.

Corrosive contact: When an enemy is engaged with the catacomb dragon at the start of its turn, it takes 3 acid damage.

Resist acid 14+: When an acid attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 104**
MD	15	

Nastier Breath Options

Choose one or both:

- When a creature attacks the haze to clear it, if it misses, reroll the attack against one of its random allies caught in the haze.
- The haze expands the round after it forms, enveloping another nearby ally of each creature within it.

Gorge Dragon

"Gorge dragon" is a term invented by humanoids as a mnemonic device to remember all the ways these types of black dragons (who refer to themselves as deep dragons) can be dangerous. Gorge dragons spend the majority of their time on land, but are equally at home in the water. They make their lairs in swamps or river deltas near turbulent bodies of water where shipwrecks occur with some frequency. The dragons dive into the water looking for lost treasures that have sunk into deep underwater trenches (the first "gorge"). They are unafraid of the waves and currents that destroy mere sailing vessels. Legends of gorge dragons causing hurricanes and tidal waves are common around the coastal cities.

The gorge dragon's breath can take the unwary by surprise. It manifests as a blast of multicolored light. The light helps the gorge dragon see underwater and signals other deepsea denizens to stay away. The *color spray* spell is rumored to be based on the breath of a gorge dragon. The breath weapon is the second "gorge," as in "gorgeous." The spray of colors really is beautiful to behold at a safe distance, though one could argue whether anything within visual range of a black dragon is considered a "safe distance."

The final meaning of "gorge" references the creature's bizarre and insatiable appetite. A gorge dragon will eat almost anything that will fit in its mouth, often including metal or metallic items! In actuality, gorge dragons have developed a palette for magic as if it were a seasoning and have learned to digest whatever the magic happens to be attached to. Thus, while a gorge dragon might get the occasional hankering for a pile of copper coins, offering up a suit of enchanted chainmail is an expensive but consistently effective way to escape a gorge dragon's clutches.

Large 5th level spoiler [DRAGON]
Initiative: +13
Vulnerability: fire

Coiling +10 vs. PD—18 damage, and the dragon grabs the target; while grabbed, the target takes 9 damage at the start of each of its turns
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The dragon regains the use of its *dazzling breath* if it's expended and can use it during its next turn.

Bite +13 (includes grab bonus) vs. AC (one enemy it's grabbing)—25 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes no damage and is instead *swallowed whole* (see below).
Limited use: 1/round, as a free action.

C: Dazzling breath +9 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—14 damage, and if the target has 40 hp or fewer after being hit, it's weakened until the end of its next turn
Limited use: 1/battle, as a quick action.

Swallowed whole: A creature that is swallowed whole must start making last gasp saves during its next turn. An ally can assist with the save as normal, but the save remains hard (16+) in that case. A roll of 16–19 causes the creature to be regurgitated from the dragon's gut, while a 20 means that the creature cuts/rips a hole through the dragon's flesh to escape (dealing basic attack damage automatically). GM note: This is a REALLY good place to stick weird treasure. Just sayin'.

Chain constrictor: The gorge dragon can have up to two enemies grabbed at the same time.

Resist cold 14+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Water-breathing: Gorge dragons swim well and can breathe underwater.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 164**
MD	17	

Void Dragon

Void dragons are simultaneously the easiest and hardest dragons for adventurers to confront. Their lairs are accessible, usually overlooking some prominent road or waterway. Almost any structurally sound shelter seems to be acceptable including but not limited to forts, caves, mines, castles, and temples. Void dragons also tend toward capriciousness, so an adventuring party that assaults the lair of one and is repelled will not likely find the dragon there again.

Huge 7th level caster [DRAGON]
Initiative: +13

Jaws and claws +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—26 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The dragon regains the use of its *ensorceling breath* if it's expended and can use it during its next turn.
Miss: 13 damage.

C: Ensorceling breath +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—24 damage, and the dragon's breath coalesces into two small void beasts of rapidly shifting form (see below)
Miss: The dragon's breath coalesces into one small void beast (see below).
Void beasts: Each beast appears next to the dragon, acts as it wishes, and enters the initiative order after the next two creatures have taken their turns. See void beast stats at end of the entry.
Limited use: 1/battle, as a quick action.

Draconic grace: At the start of each of the void dragon's turns, roll a d6 to see if it gets an extra standard action. If the roll is equal to or less than the escalation die, the void dragon can take an extra standard action that turn.

After the first success, the grace die bumps up to a d8. After the second success, it's a d10, then a d12 after the third success, and finally a d20 after the fourth one.

AC	**23**	
PD	21	**HP 290**
MD	19	

Level 6 Void Beast
Slam +11 vs. AC—18 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The void beast spawns a new void beast at full hit points. It follows the same rules for beasts formed by *ensorceling breath*.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 27**
MD	18	

Empyrean Dragon

Empyrean dragons are the only black dragon variant to make their homes solely in the overworld. They are also unique among the black dragon family in that each individual has three heads. Unlike ettins, the heads are agreeable to one another and work in concert. They don't have distinct personalities.

The stringent ritual requirements for maintaining connection to the magic of the overworld when traveling far from it means that empyrean dragons are willing to descend to the world only about once every human generation (if they want to maintain their full power). Much of the time, they achieve their goals via minions and proxies. Only during the appointed season do these dragons let loose their decades of rage upon the world in the flesh. Most towns and cities attacked by an empyrean dragon cease to exist—no ruins, no refugees, and no plunder.

Huge 9th level spoiler [DRAGON]
Initiative: +17

Gleaming bite +14 vs. AC—50 damage, and one effect triggers based on the head that attacks (GM's choice)
Head 1: The target can't use recoveries until end of its next turn.
Head 2: One enemy that hit the dragon since the dragon's last turn takes 12 damage.
Head 3: The target moves to a nearby non-harmful location of the dragon's choice as a free action. This movement can provoke opportunity attacks.

[Special trigger] **C: Crying heavens +13 vs. MD (each enemy in the battle)**—20 ongoing damage

Miss: 10 ongoing damage.

Temporal manastorm: The empyrean dragon's connection to the overworld falters, creating a storm of distorted time and magic in the area. The dragon's critical hit range for all attacks expands by 2 until the end of the battle. In addition, when a target saves against the ongoing damage from this attack, the crit range of its attacks against the dragon expands by 1 until the end of the battle.

Limited use: 1/battle, as a free action when first staggered.

Three heads are better than one: The empyrean dragon can make two *gleaming bite* attacks as a single standard action, one each from two heads. The third head is assumed to be maneuvering the body around. It can choose not to make one of those attacks to end any condition affecting it except for ongoing damage (this includes the stunned condition, even though it technically doesn't get an action when stunned).

An enemy who scores a critical hit against an empyrean dragon can forego the extra damage to lop off one of the dragon's heads. If an enemy deals 150 damage with a single attack against the dragon, the attack will also remove a head. An empyrean dragon with two remaining heads can make only one *gleaming bite* attack as a standard action and can't sacrifice that attack to remove conditions. The dragon dies if all three heads are removed.

C: Venom breath +13 vs. PD (1d3 + 1 nearby enemies)—35 damage

Swarming motes: Each time the dragon uses this attack, a swarm of light motes that resolve into scorpions and stinging insects swirl around the targets. The swarm harasses each targeted enemy, hit or miss. During its next turn, any enemy being swarmed this way must choose one: Take 25 damage; OR roll twice for each attack roll it makes that turn, taking the lower result.

Intermittent breath: An empyrean dragon can use *venom breath* 1d2 + 1 times per battle, but never two turns in a row.

AC	**25**	
PD	23	**HP 510**
MD	21	

Building Battles

Catacomb dragons are wary of allowing humanoids into their lairs, but over the ages they have learned how to whisper the right words and make the right promises to draw derro to them as servants and slaves. In their madness, the derro worship the dragon's geode as a dark fire god, seeing the dragon as the god's representative in the world. They also believe the geode's cleansing fires are the only way for them to go to the ancestor halls upon death.

Gorge dragons and void dragons often work with the same allies, including servants of the Three. In some areas of deeper water among the Fangs, bands of sahuagin have taken to "dragon-god" worship—they capture slaves (or draw-in adventurers) for the dragon to feast upon, give it treasure from sunken ships, and even sacrifice themselves when prey is scarce.

Empyrean dragons are almost always encountered in the overworld, but they use many minions to do their bidding in the world. Many will subjugate storm giants or cloud giants, or hire ogre mage messengers. A few are even rumored to keep zorigami allies, hoarding clockwork parts that they exchange with the creatures for their service.

Black Dragons and the Icons

The Black manages to keep loyalty to the Three among most black dragons across the Empire one way or the other. Many believe her talents in espionage and assassination will eventually be brought to bear against the Blue and the Red, thus re-establishing the dominance of their kind. Whether that is the result of clever politicking and promises or the actual plans of a creature whose forethought covers millennia is anyone's guess. She is also not above bribes and threats for those individuals whose draconic pride has given way to more material concerns.

A few rogue black dragons view the Black as a traitor to the cause in working at all with the "later generations." As one moves away from Drakkenhall, the odds of finding a lone black dragon discontented with the Black increases. Of course, finding a dead and mangled black dragon in its lair is a pretty good indicator of her discontent as well.

Black dragons will occasionally make deals with some of the other icons. The Lich King is both powerful and old—a combination that black dragons can respect. Those black dragons who believe the Elf Queen has the Green imprisoned might be persuaded to adhere to a non-interference policy, though never outright assistance. Finally, it so happens that followers of the High Druid, in their zeal to push back against the growth of civilization and retain the Old Ways, occasionally do something a black dragon finds helpful or vice versa. The two factions honor their debts to one another but ensure that no debt accrues too large or for too long.

The Emperor and the Orc Lord are both anathema to black dragons. How can something with such a short lifespan claim rulership over anything?

Names

Neak, Zburator, Imugi, Zilant, Bakunawa, Illuyanka, Kunmanggur, Oshumare, Yurlungur.

Things Black Dragons Hoard

Black dragon pride is deeply rooted in the glory of their common heritage and the belief that the olden days were always better. Therefore the older something is—no matter what condition it may be in or how imminently useful it may be—the more value and quality it is seen to have by a black dragon. The black dragons' accumulation of old stuff and fervent hope for the reclamation of glory in the future leads to another unique black dragon hoarding behavior—repurposing. Black dragons are as creative as they are dastardly so their lairs are often cleverly decorated with recovered treasures. Coffins unearthed from the land or sea are relieved of their original contents and used as cabinets or bunks for live-in minions. Ships' wheels are interlaced like the gears of a clock in elaborate patterns. Art depicting the defeat of other chromatic dragons is highly valued no matter what the era of origin. One black dragon was even found to have collected art pieces depicting the defeat of other black dragons! Whether the pieces were intended to be some sort macabre ancestor shrine, a signal of mutiny among draconic culture, or a blatant display of ironic confidence was never determined.

Adventure Hooks

Feed the Starving Ground—One terrible raid in the 8th Age saw twelve empyrean dragons attack the ogre-mage capital of Ido. That location is now called the Starving Ground and not so much as a sheaf of rice has grown there in the last five Ages. The land needs to be returned to its rightful state to support a growing Imperial population. That probably means finding the last known empyrean dragon from that assault, Ahzi-Dahaka, who is thought to be bound between two mountains.

Finders Weepers—A crazed wizard or sorcerer has managed to acquire the geode owned by the catacomb dragon Fu'Tsang and intends to weaponize it. The geode ought to be returned to the dragon, but Fu'Tsang is in no better mood for visitors than the magician.

Ground to a Halt—A large millstone was supposedly sent from Barae to Midcoast as a sign of peace, but it never arrived at port. Each side accuses the other of sabotage and hostilities are beginning again. A gorge dragon named Aido-Hwedo in the area may have the stone, or at least might be able to find it, but at what cost?

BLUE SORCERER

In retrospect, signing a treaty that allowed the world's elder evil sorcerer to establish a city where she trains cadres of fanatical reptilian spellcasters may not have been one of the Empire's shining moments.

3rd level caster [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Nasty dagger or short spear +8 vs. AC—6 damage

Minor Spell

R: Lightning fork +8 vs. PD—6 lightning damage
Natural even hit or miss: The sorcerer can target a different nearby enemy with the attack.

Major Spells

C: Breath of the Blue +8 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—10 lightning damage, and at the start of the target's next turn, 1d6 nearby allies of the target take 4 lightning damage

C: Chaos orb +8 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—8 lightning damage
Natural even hit: The sorcerer gains one use of the target's racial power, if any. It must use that power by the end of the battle or lose it, and it can't use the power this turn.

Power-monger: When the blue sorcerer starts its turn and it didn't *gather power* the previous turn, choose whether it will gather power or cast a spell this turn. When it chooses to cast a spell, roll a d20 to see if it uses a minor spell or a major spell: **1–10:** minor spell; **11–20:** major spell.

Gather power: Like a PC sorcerer, a blue sorcerer can use its standard action to gather power in order to cast a double-strength and double-damage spell with its next standard action. When it gathers power, the sorcerer rolls a d6 and gains one of the following chaotic benefits.

1–2: The sorcerer gains a +1 bonus to AC until the start of its next turn.

3–4: One nearby enemy of the sorcerer's choice takes damage equal to sorcerer's level (3).

5–6: Each nearby enemy engaged with the sorcerer's allies takes damage equal to sorcerer's level (3); OR grant one nearby dragon with *intermittent breath* an additional use of its breath weapon this battle.

Nastier Specials

Escalating caster: Add the escalation die to the sorcerer's *power-monger* rolls and attack rolls.

Sorcerous evasion (kobold sorcerers only): Once per battle when an attack misses the sorcerer, the attacker takes the miss damage from that attack, if any, and the sorcerer takes no damage.

AC	**18**	
PD	14	**HP 48**
MD	17	

"According to the Lesser Codicils of the Edict of High Rock, the sorcerers that follow the path of the Blue must be considered legal representatives of the Empire within Drakkenhall. Outside Drakkenhall, so long as they are farther than 300 yards from a duly recognized embassy, they may at our pleasure be regarded as enemies of the state. But the truth is that smoothly reclassifying Imperial officers as Imperial enemies is fraught with complications. As often as not, agents of the Blue who ***act*** *as if they belong in Imperial cities pass unmolested. Especially when they have the sense to avoid coming across as outright agents of the Three."*

—Salzadin, Imperial agent training, 17th week

Building Battles

Blue sorcerers are found working with almost anyone. They prefer having dragonic servitors, or lizardman or kobold allies in a pinch, but if acting as an agent in civilized lands, they freely use mercenaries and NPC adventurers to support them in fulfilling their goals. Almost always, they are the leaders of such groups, though occasionally they may hire themselves out as magical muscle to a powerful warlord if it suits their needs (like getting said warlord to give them access to a desired location).

They are perhaps the most dangerous when acting as the direct agents of a blue dragon. What seems like a reasonable battle with a blue sorcerer and some kobold mooks can suddenly turn deadly when the sorcerer's employer shows up mid-battle.

In the wilds, the PCs might come across relic-hunting parties that are directed by a blue sorcerer with ogre or troll heavies that have been hired to take care of "problems."

Blue Sorcerers and the Icons

If a blue sorcerer is not currently committed to the cause of the Three, it certainly must have been committed to those icons at some point earlier in its life.

Other than the Blue, the Crusader is the icon most likely to hire a blue sorcerer, mostly because the sorcerers' focus on draconic magic has prevented them from having truck with demons, something that can't always be said about other minions of the Three.

If a blue sorcerer were to defect from the Drakkenhall regime, the two most likely destinations would be Shadowport and Axis. In Shadowport, defectors could hide in the same shadows that shield the Prince. In Axis, they might find a strange welcome in the machinations surrounding the Emperor.

Races United in Service

Blue sorcerers come from a variety of reptilian and draconic humanoid races. Lizardmen and dragonics are most common, but the warrens of Drakkenhall spawn other stranger reptilian races. A few exceptional kobolds claw their way into acceptance as official blue sorcerers. Feel free to use the baseline stats above for any race of blue sorcerer, tweaking the stats and using that creature's racial ability, if it's from a PC race, if you like.

Blue sorcerers don't settle for wearing blue robes or blue armor. Each blue sorcerer dyes its body or paints its scales daily as a form of devotion. You'd think that powerful sorcerers could use magic to permanently change their own color, but all magical color applications are also performed in a daily ritual.

If the blue sorcerers were human or elven, their style of magic could qualify as a school. But "school" is a soft word that has nothing to do with the harsh lives of scale-bearing followers of the Three. Think of the path of the Blue as a hive of sorcery, kept buzzing by the Blue's continued residence in close proximity to mortal magicians in Drakkenhall.

Influences on Other Sorcerers

Many humanoid sorcerers of the Empire think of the Blue as the inspiration or source of their magic without participating in the Blue's organization. Human and half-elven sorcerers claiming kinship with the Blue may imitate the body-painting aesthetic, going so far as to paint blue scales onto their faces and hands. Permanent tattoos are less common because "true blues" view imitation by lesser non-scaled races as an insult. The Three don't care, but since they don't make a point of asking their followers not to mutilate each other, any non-scaly humanoid with permanent body alterations that claims magical connection to the Blue had better be able to hold their own against their supposed allies.

Names

Blue sorcerers have personal names but never use them. The names they use are battle signs, the type of names that aggressive human raiders give their warships. Typical names include Fang of Glory, Chosen of Thrones, Treasure Slayer, True Poison, and other vainglorious epithets. The only creatures that get away with referring to true blues without using their glorious epithets are more powerful dragons, who call other people anything they want and sometimes amuse themselves by giving slightly demeaning pet names to true blues who have annoyed them.

Powerful enemies of the Three such as paladins of the Great Gold Wyrm refer to the blue sorcerers disparagingly as TBs, short for true blues. You have to be comfortable having powerful enemies to risk using this slang.

"The splotches of blue paint these primitives use to call attention to their patron demonstrate the poverty of their imagination. They know nothing of true magic. They are snakes that walk, biting with lightning instead of fangs."

—Jresso Pandomblin, practimagiker

Things Blue Sorcerers Carry

The gold coins minted in Drakkenhall known as draks. Strips of smoked meat that taste a bit like pork. A fragment of stone from a temple wall that mixes draconic and demonic sigils. A small blue robin's egg containing a humming wasp. A cameo picture of a human woman, glowing with health, encased in a golden-scaled locket. A fragment of a dragon's toenail etched with a glowing magical symbol of a ring—a difficult divination would reveal it's functioning as a sort of an IOU from a dragon who borrowed a treasure from the now-deceased sorcerer.

Adventure Hooks

Blue sorcerers are thickest near Drakkenhall, but they might turn up anywhere blue dragons are reported. Rumors of blue sorcerers skulking about on mystical errands turn up in even more places; the blues are favored scapegoats whenever that lightning spell goes awry and the town watch comes calling.

Allies to Dragons—It's no coincidence that blue sorcerers' spells and power-gathering magic work so smoothly alongside dragons. Dragons are rare, but it's rarer to confront a blue sorcerer on a serious mission who does not have at least one dragon ally somewhere in the area. One blue dragon and her sorcerers are searching for something in the area the PCs are traveling through. Perhaps they think the PCs have it?

Blue Palanquin—A blue sorcerer is moving along an Imperial Highways in a litter. Moving through areas not dominated by the Three, the sorcerer is seeking to stay hidden behind the curtains. The PCs are tasked to find the sorcerer, but there are many litters upon the roads, bearing all types of important people. Entanglements ensue.

Dungeon Questers—Blue sorcerers are Drakkenhall's premier living dungeon hunters. Unlike the heroes, true blues aim to explore dungeons that have some regard for the Three established on the surface. The blues also don't waste their time where living dungeons are thickest, as on Omen. Their goal is to find an out-of-the-way living dungeon that has some affinity with dragonkind, encourage it with magic or force, and keep would-be heroes away from it or slay them inside. When engaged in marshaling dungeons, blues show diplomatic talents that see them coordinating all manner of freaky monstrous alliances. Of course, the PCs have reason to find something in just one such living dungeon. . . .

Mercy Killing—Via letters, magical messages, and finally face-to-face interaction, a blue sorcerer asks the PCs to slay a dragon that has been taken captive and is undergoing torture at the hands of Crusader goons, an Imperial garrison, or vengeful adventurers. The greater the rewards offered for cooperation the stranger the sorcerer's motives.

"Some of these blues have pre-arranged resurrections. I've killed the same sorcerer three times the past two years. I'm certain of it because he's told me his name and cursed me for all of his deaths. Last time I told him to spend his lives somewhere else, but a blue-scaly named Coils of Vengeance just isn't going to leave it alone, is he?"

—Kayrok, paladin of necessary murder

BUGBEAR

It's astonishing that something so large can be so stealthy—but if you turn around suddenly to find a bugbear stalking you, it won't be the shock that kills you.

Foul, Sneaky, Killers

It's usually the smell that people notice first. An unclean bugbear—and really, are there any other kinds?—smells like a mixture of old skunk and rancid meat. Occasionally you'll catch a whiff of coppery sour blood that's still drying in its thick, hairy pelt. A bugbear may wash itself accidentally, or if directly ordered to by a superior, but staying coated in old gore is one way that bugbears announce their social status. As they see it, if there aren't any gobbets of flesh still stuck in your pelt, it may be because you aren't a killer, and that's not a reputation a bugbear wants.

Beyond the smell, bugbears look much like 7-foot tall goblins with angled, pointed ears. They appear far more feral, with thick fur that seems to catch shadows and ripple into camouflaging patterns. While the color of their fur seems to change slightly depending on the light and where they are standing, most bugbears have pelts that range from light tan to reddish brown. Their eyes are greenish white, and their pupils are as red as the blood they so love to spill.

Bugbears have good memories, but only for topics they're interested in. Ask one to answer a riddle and they may try to kill you; tell one a riddle about severed limbs, and they'll remember it forever.

Bugbears use armor and weapons whenever they can get them, usually taking them from those they kill or bullying or threatening goblin smiths into crafting them something. They favor warclubs and long spiked hammers, weapons that take advantage of their long arms and that make a satisfying squelch when they sink into warm and screaming flesh.

Bugbears are carnivores, and they're not particularly choosy about what or who they eat. No one in their right mind lets a hungry bugbear guard a prisoner they want kept alive. As a result, bugbear torturers are usually the best-fed troops in a castle.

Bugbear Scout

Goblins think of bugbears as tough advance scouts. Bugbear scouts think of themselves as killers who destroy the enemies before the goblins have a chance to run away.

Double-strength 2nd level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Flanged mace +7 vs. AC—10 damage

R: Throwing axe +7 vs. AC—8 damage
Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Stealthy maneuver +7 vs. MD (the nearby enemy with the highest MD)—The next attack the bugbear scout makes against the target this turn deals +1d12 extra damage.
Limited use: 1/round, as a quick action when the bugbear scout starts its turn unengaged.

Nastier Specials

Unpredictable: The bugbear scout gains a +5 bonus to disengage checks, and when it successfully disengages, one of the enemies engaged with it takes 1d6 damage.

AC	**18**	
PD	16	**HP 88**
MD	15	

"No better torturer than a bugbear. Meaner than a goblin, smarter than an orc, willing to freelance as enforcers if you pay them enough, and some of them just work for left-over flesh."
—Inquisitor-General Imaria of the 5th Legion

Bugbear Schemer

Bugbears with the brains to run the show have a cruel streak that's sometimes darkly humorous. Some of the stories adventurers swap in taverns focus on hilarious insults that they took from bugbears they've fought.

3rd level leader [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +7

Big-ass warclub +9 vs. AC—8 damage
Natural even hit or miss: Each of the bugbear schemer's nearby humanoid allies gains a +2 bonus to melee attacks until the start of the schemer's next turn.
Natural odd miss: 4 damage.

R: Ridiculously heavy crossbow +7 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—14 damage
Natural even hit: The target takes 1d6 extra damage.
Limited use: 1/battle.

[Special trigger] **C: Rebuke to fools +9 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—2d6 psychic damage
Limited use: 1/round as an interrupt action, when a nearby enemy rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack against it.

Combat reload: During the bugbear schemer's turn, if it doesn't engage an enemy or move, it regains a use of *ridiculously heavy crossbow* if it's expended as it reloads the crossbow.

Fighting withdrawal: When the bugbear schemer successfully disengages, one of the enemies engaged with it takes 1d6 damage.

Nastier Specials
Flee is a four-letter word: When the bugbear schemer thinks the battle is out of reach and it isn't engaged, it can try to flee once per battle. As a move action, roll a hard save. On a success, the bugbear schemer had a bolt-hole or escape plan ready and it gets away (though it's probably just getting more troops).

AC	**19**	
PD	14	**HP 42**
MD	17	

"Find five. Hire five. Kill five. Animate five. Bring five to me. And you shall be justly rewarded."
—Ostevius, populating his tomb with guardian undead bugbears

Barbarous Bugbear

Raging engines of bone-crushing fury, barbarous bugbears sneak up on their enemies and then charge with scant consideration for their own safety. More often than not, they kill their prey before their poor tactics matter.

4th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +12 (see *ferocious start*)

Warclub +9 vs. AC—11 damage
Natural even hit or miss: Each enemy engaged with the barbarous bugbear takes 1d8 damage.

R: Throwing axe +8 vs.—10 damage
Limited use: 2/battle.

Ferocious start: Until the barbarous bugbear is staggered or the escalation die is 2+, it acts twice per round. Roll initiative once at +12. It takes its second turn when the initiative count is seven less (minimum 1).

AC	**18**	
PD	17	**HP 51**
MD	16	

Building Battles

Bugbears are seldom solitary. If you do find one (or a small group) alone in the wilderness, don't be surprised if a goblin war party is within hollering distance. It's common to find them accompanying goblins and hobgoblins as serious muscle. Bugbear scouts roam out ahead of the pack, looking for targets. Most goblin packs that aren't led by a hobgoblin captain or warmage follow a bugbear schemer. If both are in the raiding party, there's a good chance the schemer is looking for a way to take out the competition.

Goblins like having barbarous bugbears on their side when things get dicey, because the brutes will charge in to get their foe's attention while the goblins can hang back and use ranged attacks. They don't like them so well when there's no one else to attack, because the bugbears take it out on them.

Near the Crusader's hellholes/fortresses, it's not uncommon to see a dark paladin leading a troop of bugbear heavy infantry. Best to let them fight the demons.

"Even proper goblins or orcs should never trust a bugbear. They are liars and cheats and bullies; they skulk in the dark, steal your food, steal your bedding, steal your mate, steal your shoes, drop your shoes in the chieftain's mating chamber, lie about seeing you there when chieftain gets angry, then laugh about it as you are beaten in punishment. Kill them. If you can find one, kill it on sight."
—Yuzzuk Bloodtongue, who has had a bad day

Bugbears and the Icons

Crusader: The Crusader is seldom choosy about his troops as long as they're brave, dependable, and deadly. Bugbears only fill one of the three criteria, but the more mercenary goblinoids occasionally hire on with the Crusader to fight the good fight against demons.

Dwarf King: The Dwarf King hates bugbears, but not much more than he hates all the goblinoids who creep up into dwarven territory through forgotten caverns. His detestation is tempered by the fact that bugbears seldom have worthless loot.

Prince of Shadows: If any icon has an affinity for bugbears, it's the Prince of Shadows. Legend said he blessed a particularly clever goblin long ago, and that's where bugbears came from. Of course, other stories have him mating with a goblin or replacing a barbarian's baby with a goblin to create the first bugbear, so no one knows for sure. One thing is clear: if a cruel sense of humor goes hand in hand with the Prince of Shadows, bugbears like the schemers get it.

Names

Bugbears take traditional goblinoid names, usually with more growl and snarling than needed. More than one illiterate sailor has mistaken a currach for a bugbear's proper name.

"Bugbears are funny. Sure, they're also psychopathically cruel and may hammer your skull after stealing the loot you were both supposed to share, but they'll probably say something funny in the process and prop your unconscious body in an inappropriate and hilarious position. If you survive you'll laugh about it afterward, I guarantee it. It's sort of refreshing."

—Lucan of the Gilded Mile, thief-master

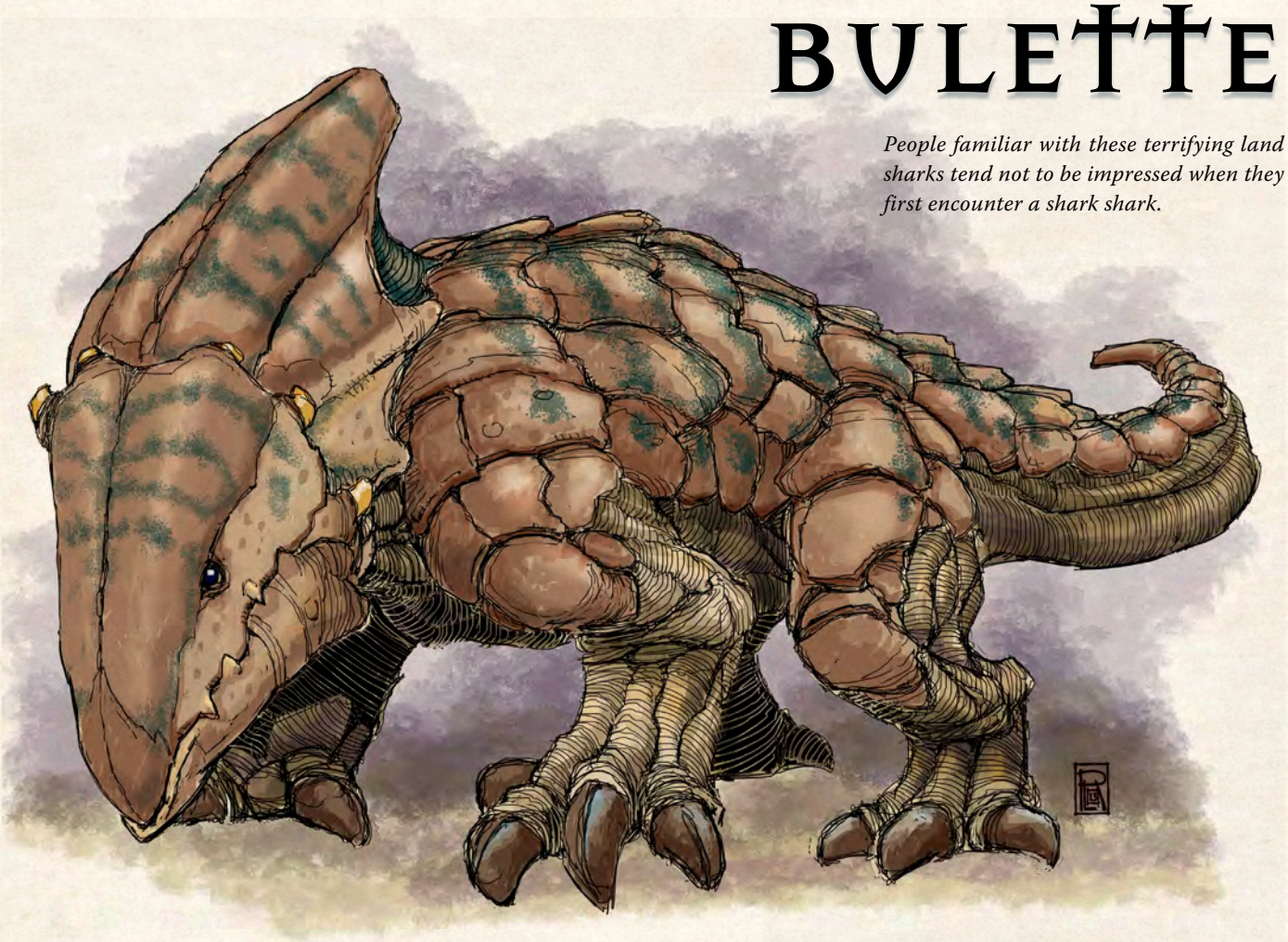
Adventure Hooks

Axe of Shadows—A powerful magical axe may know the secret to a mystery the PCs need to uncover, but it's well known that a local barbarous bugbear is wielding the blade. The PCs must infiltrate the bugbear caverns, retrieve the blade, and deal with the challenge that the weapon absorbs the personality of the last creature to die wielding it.

Savage Saboteur—An informant has warned the PCs that a town will soon be under attack, and that a saboteur in town will be opening the town gates. The PCs find several red herrings arranged by a local bugbear thieves' guild leader, who plans to have his own rogues open the gates. When the rogues rebel and refuse to betray the city, they come to the PCs for help.

BULETTE

People familiar with these terrifying land sharks tend not to be impressed when they first encounter a shark shark.



The Dreaded Land Shark

The first bulettes were created by magic in an age long past. Some whisper that they may have been created by the dwarves to dig their tunnels and eat kobolds. Others say that they were a plague created by the long-lost briar elves.

Physically the bulette resembles a shark, except for its powerful legs designed for digging: it has rows of teeth sharp enough to shear through armor and a shell across its upper body that rises to a ridge like a shark's fin.

Bulettes have split into subspecies, though the reason for this is unclear. It may be the outcome of deliberate magical tampering, or possibly the result of burrowing too deep and encountering the mystical "white blood of the earth." The bumoorah is a fast, lean predator that moves through the earth with deadly grace. The deep bulette is an ur-bulette, a huge monster that crushes rock in its jaws and chases delvers down endless tunnels. The green bulette is a forest-dwelling hunter that constructs a decorator crab-style disguise of living plants for itself. The lumberland dirt-fisher acts like a cross between a trapdoor spider and a frog in the way it hunts, though it eats mules and cattle instead of bugs.

Green Bulette

This bulette adorns its rough-textured outer shell with soil and plants as it rises from the soil. It appears to be only a shrub-covered knoll or grassy hillock until it launches out of the ground. In mating season it becomes fearsomely territorial and will attack humanoids, although it is usually content to eat jackalopes, hodag, and lesser glawackuses.

Large 5th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +12

Charging maw +12 vs. AC—30 damage

Natural even miss: The target pops free from all enemies engaged with it and is vulnerable to all attacks (save ends).

Leaping bite: The green bulette gains a +3 bonus to attack and damage with its first attack each battle.

Into the earth: The first time each round an attack hits the bulette, it can choose to hunker down as a free action. If it does, it gains a +3 bonus to AC and PD until the start of its next turn. Force attacks and opportunity attacks don't trigger this ability. If the green bulette hunkers down while it's moving (for example, from a readied action), its movement ends that turn.

Blood-frenzy escalator: While at least one creature in the battle is staggered or unconscious, the bulette gains a bonus to its attacks and damage equal to the escalation die but can't use *into the earth*. Creatures that have no blood (constructs, oozes, plant creatures, etc.) don't trigger this ability.

Occasional burrower: Like all bulettes, the green bulette can burrow. While above ground, it prefers to move slowly on the surface and rely on its plant- and soil-covered shell to stay hidden until it attacks.

AC 19
PD 17 **HP 92**
MD 13

Lumberland Dirt-Fisher

The dirt-fisher hunts by waiting inside a covered pit. The lid of the pit is a cement-like disk made from the dirt-fisher's saliva and crushed rocks. When the dirt-fisher attacks, it lifts the lid and pulls a passing creature to it with its long sticky tongue. It can pull a mule or cow or squonk off a trail and into the pit faster than most wary lumberjacks can blink.

Huge 5th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +11

Tongue lash and bite +14 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies)—30 damage

R: Sticky tongue +15 vs. PD—20 damage
Natural even hit: The target pops free from all enemies engaged with it, is pulled into the pit with the dirt-fisher (who engages it), and loses its next move action. Climbing out of the pit requires a move action and a DC 20 check. If the bulette is not in its pit, the bulette pulls the target to itself and engages it.

Hole digger: A dirt-fisher can burrow incredibly quickly for short distances, but it prefers to attack from within its pre-dug trap-door pit. It usually has a few pits dug nearby if forced to leave its current pit.

Into the earth: The first time each round an attack hits the dirt-fisher, it can hunker down and pull the lid on its pit shut. If it does, it gains a +3 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn, and any creature in the pit takes a –5 penalty to checks to climb out of the pit. Force attacks and opportunity attacks don't trigger this ability.

Nowhere to run: The dirt-fisher deals double damage against creatures engaged with it in its pit.

AC 17
PD 15 **HP 135**
MD 11

Ravenous Bumoorah

This bulette subspecies is lean and lightning fast, using powerful sonic vibrations to blast apart rock and soil as it travels. The high-pitched sound it makes is often the only warning its victims have before it attacks. The bumoorah can't find you if you climb a tree, but it is VERY patient.

5th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +13

Land-shark maw +15 vs. AC—14 damage
Natural even hit: The target takes 10 thunder damage.

Blood-frenzy escalator: While at least one creature in the battle is staggered or unconscious, the bulette gains a bonus to its attacks and damage equal to the escalation die. Creatures that have no blood (constructs, oozes, plant creatures, etc.) don't trigger this ability.

Earth surge: Whenever the bumoorah takes damage from an attack, it rolls a save; on a 16+ it can immediately dive beneath the ground, preventing further attacks against it until it surfaces at the start of its next turn. Force attacks and opportunity attacks don't trigger this ability.

Serious burrower: The bumoorah can burrow incredibly quickly for short distances. Bumoorahs are renowned for the dust-spurts and vibrating sound they generate as they shoot through the ground like hungry spears.

AC 17
PD 15 **HP 46**
MD 11

Deep Bulette

These mighty beasts crawl slowly through the underworld, pulverizing the rock before them with their magical auras. Deep bulette tunnels are natural highways through the deep places of the earth, but those traversing them must beware because the beasts patrol their tunnels looking for food.

Huge 9th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +10

Pulverizing maw +15 vs. AC (1d3 enemies)—90 damage
Miss: 45 damage.

Blood frenzy: The deep bulette's crit range expands by 4 while the escalation die is 4+.

Tunnel fighter: While fighting in a tunnel with nowhere for its enemies to move but ahead of it, the deep bulette gains the following abilities based on the escalation die:
Escalation die is odd: When the bulette hits an enemy engaged with it with an attack, that target pops free from it and is hampered (save ends).
Escalation die is even: The deep bulette engages each nearby enemy in front of it as it pushes its bulk inexorably forward down the tunnel. Enemies pushed ahead of it this way don't get to make opportunity attacks.

AC 25
PD 23 **HP 378**
MD 19

Building Battles

Dirt-fishers generally work alone, although various scavengers such as dire animals often linger around an area where one is hunting, picking up scraps. Deep bulettes also work alone, although it's said that the drow have figured out what scents they like and can direct the beasts where they wish.

A common game of courage for orc warriors is to successfully ride a ravenous boomorah, and so orcs will often be found near their hunting grounds. The orcs have developed different strategies for staying on, including hooks on ropes, sticky saddles, and free-styling. Hobgoblin soldiers know how to use the proper vegetation to get green bulettes to quickly dig the trenches the hobgoblins use during sieges or to protect their holdings.

Things Found in the Stomach of a Bulette

Pebbles. Dirt. Twigs. Gravel. A boot. A crushed humanoid skeleton. Belt buckle from an Imperial tax collector. Jackalope foot. Lion skull. Twenty strange tarnished silver coins of unknown origin. Masonry nails. Shield. Door hinge.

Adventure Hooks

Bulette Rodeo—Local farmers hold a yearly competition to see who can ride a captured bulette the longest. Unknown to the villagers (but known to the adventurers), this bulette has a map tattooed onto it. A rival group wants the map too, but to obtain it both sides realize they will need to ride the bulette. With match fixing, judge bribing, poisoned drinks, and attempts at assassinations all on the cards, just surviving long enough to ride in the super-dangerous rodeo will be an adventure.

Bumoorahville—A whole village has been built over a river on stilts and walkways, including some outlying homes that wend their way through the treetops deep into the forest on either side of the river. The villagers move about exclusively via aerial walkways, fishing in the river and harvesting the trees. The village is in the middle of the territory of a family of ravenous bumoorah, and nobody can approach it without marching through bulette territory or using a boat. Once a month the villagers sacrifice a large animal (or maybe a visiting stranger?) by dragging it on a rope along the banks of the river, keeping the ravenous bumoorah close to Bumoorahville.

Mating Season and the False Fishers—A group of bandits (or a group of secretive wizards, or evil cultists, or religious hermits) are digging holes and making tracks to imitate a lumberland dirt-fisher, keeping visitors away from their lair (or tower, or temple, etc.). Unfortunately, it's dirt-fisher mating season and amorous dirt-fisher bulls are converging on the location, attracted by the nests that the (non-existent) females have built. The adventurers are seeking the bandits (wizards/cultists/hermits) and have been pre-warned that any signs of bulettes they see will be fake.

Not Alone in the Dark—An underground cave-in cuts off the adventurers' path back to the surface (or maybe drops them from the surface into the uncharted depths), but a deep bulette's tunnel network is now open to them. Underworld creatures use deep bulette tunnels as highways, though they all flee when they hear a deep bulette coming. As they begin exploring the adventurers hear something that could be distant drums, or could be the footfalls of a deep bulette. It's hard to tell which direction the sound is coming from due to the echoes, but the drums *are* getting closer.

Queen of the Bulettes—The fort at Cape Thunder is collapsing; bulettes are undermining the foundations. Who is controlling the bulettes? Captain Sassone Bitterbark thinks it's a dwarven plot. Meanwhile agents of the Dwarf King are attempting to recover a long-buried treasure and are surreptitiously digging nearby. They too are suffering from cave-ins and suspect Captain Bittermark of controlling the bulettes. Both sides suspect the adventurers of being in league with their supposed enemy. With the two sides set to go to war the adventurers must pick a side or find out who is really controlling the bulettes.

Recover the Offering—A peace-gift was being transported from The Court in the Queen's Wood to Forge. Somewhere near Oldwall the people transporting the item were eaten by a bulette. The Queen's people have asked the adventurers to recover the item from the bulette's stomach.

The Bulette's Lament—A group of half-orc legionnaires have been charged with the task of taming a bulette to dig holes for them. Some higher-up in the Imperial armies wants tame bulettes to dig trenches and build embankments. It's an insane plan that will never work, but they will do their duty. Unknown to them, the bulette that they have chosen is a transfigured elf who used unstable magic to escape from the Diabolist. Now demons are hunting the legionnaires and their bulette in a cage, and they ask the heroes for help.

The Green Witch—A hag has built her hut on the back of a gigantic green bulette, which wanders around the deep woods. The hag and her "tame" bulette are acting as agents of the Diabolist (or Lich King, or High Druid), spreading demonic (or necromantic, or druidic) influence throughout the region.

We're Going to Need a Bigger Cart—A town on the Green Star river is plagued by a lumberland dirt-fisher. The town owes protection money to a local band of warriors and is keen to reopen trade and hide the problem from outsiders. The local sheriff hires the adventurers to kill the menace, but will they fall prey to its jaws? The roads leading to the town are close to its hunting grounds, and an Imperial tax collector is coming soon so the adventurers have a limited window of time to find the menace and deal with it.

Cambion Assassin

Most demons want to destroy the world. Cambion assassins seem disturbingly at home here, acting as if they want nothing more than to play at games of assassination and murder. It's almost too civilized for comfort.

Demonic Assassins for Hire

Cambions hire their services out as assassins to the highest bidder. Cambion assassins are humanoid in shape and possess a mix of human and demon features, with the demonic characteristics usually very strong; for example, many have a sharp, pointed horn that comes out of their head, hard scaly crimson flesh, oversized jaws of sharp teeth, or sharp ridges and bone spurs growing out of their flesh. Each different type of cambion assassin claims its rank-name among its brethren and is identified by the type of bladed weapon it has grown from its own flesh and bone through exposure to the mortal souls it has killed. Cambions also make good assassins thanks to their natural affinity for cloaking themselves from victims. This ability fully develops after the cambion assassin kills and absorbs a soul for the first time.

To these offspring of mortals and demons, killing is a competition. Like all highly trained competitors, they expect to be paid well for their talents. The best of the best belong to an Abyssal hunting club known as the Hellblades. This moniker is often used to describe all cambion assassins, but they never use it themselves unless they are a member of the club. One of the Hellblades might take offense and clear up the mistake for free.

Cambion dirks have yet to fulfill a contract successfully. They are still dangerous, but not the expert assassins of lore. They find themselves attracted to killing and scenes of death, but have yet to create those scenes themselves.

Cambion sickles have started building their mountain of blood gold. They are eager to kill and take on plenty of contracts. They often overestimate their abilities and bite off more than they can chew. Cambion sickles are likely to run with an entourage of dirks, which they order around as "apprentices."

The more a cambion assassin kills, the more its blade grows. Once the sickle reaches full height, it grows forward and flattens out. These cambions are known as katar. They are veterans of multiple contracts. Cambion katars have more refined talents and are willing to say no to a contract, though they will usually refer such a job to a lesser cambion assassin happily.

Elite cambion assassins can afford to join the official organization of the Hellblades. The amount of gold required to join depends on who tells the tale. Some mention hoards built to make dragons envious. Others suggest the gold is merely a way to keep score, with entry into the club based on completing a job against an exotic target. When someone hires a cambion assassin Hellblade, they must truly hate the victim.

Cambion Dirk

The cambion's grown blade is barely visible. It has yet to kill anyone and officially join the ranks of the Hellblades. Your death is its ticket to bigger and better contracts.

4th level mook [DEMON]
Initiative: +8

Damned dirk +10 vs. AC—7 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The cambion becomes cloaked until it's hit by an attack against MD or until it misses with a natural odd attack roll.

Dark step: While cloaked, the cambion dirk automatically succeeds on all disengage checks.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 13 (mook)**
MD	14	

Mook: Kill one cambion dirk mook for every 13 damage you deal to the mob.

Cambion Sickle

The cambion assassin looks confident with its deadly sharp curved blade at the ready. Every few moments, a ripple runs across its skin, making it harder to see.

5th level troop [DEMON]
Initiative: +11

Damned sickle +11 vs. AC—17 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The cambion becomes cloaked until it's hit by an attack against MD or until it misses with a natural odd attack roll.

R: Ray of darkness +11 vs. MD—10 negative energy damage
Natural even hit: The target is confused until the end of its next turn, or if the cambion was cloaked when it attacked, the confusion is save ends.

Improved dark step: While cloaked, the cambion sickle automatically succeeds on all disengage checks and gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against ranged attacks.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 70**
MD	15	

Cambion Assassin Random Demon Abilities

Non-mook cambion assassins may have one random demon ability (see page 209 of the *13th Age* core rules). Roll 1d10 for each cambion: if you roll less than or equal to its level, it has a random ability. Here's the reminder chart for easy reference.

Random Demon Abilities Reminder (D8)

1: *True seeing*
2: *Resist fire 18+*
3: *Invisibility* when first staggered
4: *Resist energy 12+*
5: *Fear aura*
6: *Teleport 1d3 times each battle*
7: *Demonic speed*
8: *Gate in allied demon*

Cambion Katar

This creature's blade has developed into a long, thin blade like a shark's fin. Its cold eyes reflect its many remorseless kills. It stands with the tense stillness of a trained killer, with little flourishes of blade or movement.

6th level wrecker [DEMON]
Initiative: +13

Damned katar +12 vs. AC—20 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The cambion becomes cloaked until it's hit by an attack against MD or until it misses with a natural odd attack roll.

Spiky headbutt +12 vs. AC—8 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

R: Ray of darkness +12 vs. MD—10 negative energy damage
Natural even hit: The target is confused until the end of its next turn, or if the cambion was cloaked when it attacked, the confusion is save ends.

Corruption aura: When an enemy misses the cambion katar with a melee attack, it suffers one of the following effects:
Natural even miss: The attacker takes 5 poison damage.
Natural odd miss: The cambion katar can make a *spiky headbutt* attack against the attacker as a free action.

Superior dark step: While cloaked, the cambion katar automatically succeeds on all disengage checks and gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against close and ranged attacks.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 80**
MD	15	

Cambion Hellblade

With their long, wickedly sharp blades, they're the best assassins in the hellholes or the Abyss. Or the worst, if you're their target.

8th level wrecker [DEMON]
Initiative: +17

Damned hellblade +14 vs. AC—40 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The cambion becomes cloaked until it's hit by an attack against MD or until it misses with a natural odd attack roll.
Miss: 20 damage.

Spiky headbutt +14 vs. AC—10 damage, and 15 ongoing poison damage

R: Ray of darkness +14 vs. MD—20 negative energy damage
Natural even hit: The target is confused until the end of its next turn, or if the cambion was cloaked when it attacked, the confusion is save ends.

Cloaked in evil: The cambion hellblade starts every battle cloaked. As a quick action, the hellblade can drop its cloaking to make a *spiky headbutt* attack as a free action.

Corruption aura: When an enemy misses the cambion hellblade with a melee attack, it suffers one of the following effects:
Natural even miss: The attacker takes 15 poison damage.
Natural odd miss: The cambion hellblade can make a *spiky headbutt* attack against the attacker as a free action.

Ultimate dark step: While cloaked, the cambion hellblade automatically succeeds on all disengage checks, gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against close and ranged attacks, and can drop its cloaking as a quick action to teleport to a nearby location it can see (instead of making an extra attack).

AC	**24**	
PD	21	**HP 140**
MD	21	

Building Battles

Except for the dirks, most cambion assassins prefer not to work with other cambions. Occasionally they'll plan a hit that requires help, and there are always plenty of dirks willing to sign on for the chance to kill someone and to get in good with the "higher-ups." They will also work with demons, but prefer those who are more cunning such as imps over the ones that favor chaos and destruction first, and careful planning second. One favorite ploy, however, is to let loose a frenzy demon to draw attention—or a mark's bodyguards—while the cambion quietly kills the target.

Cambion assassins are also careful about disposing of the remains of those they kill. They don't want to leave any clues that can be tracked back to them, or worse, have their target get resurrected (the ultimate failed hit!). Therefore, many cambion assassins find ways to keep oozes (especially gelatinous cubes) around, giving them an easy means of disposal that takes care of any issues. They've been known to trap their lairs with the creatures as well.

Killing in the Name of Gold

"250 gold pieces to start. Clerics double. Paladins triple. Women and children, another 100 each. No sorcerers. They start ripping off spells and the next thing you know half the city guard is moving in due to the chaos. It's another 100 gold a day to find the target and figure out the best way to kill him. If you have that information, give it to me now to save yourself time and money. Each of the coins must have touched your blood. Otherwise, don't waste my time."

—Choonnoo, Cambion Katar, 15 confirmed kills, 8 suspected

Most assassins' guilds will swear off further pursuit of a target that kills one of their own. They lack the manpower to restock assassins, who take years of training. Cambion assassins take the opposite track. A target that kills one of their own becomes more valuable in their eyes. The more cambions slain by someone, the more likely a more powerful Hellblade will take it on as a challenge. Cambion assassins rarely work for free, but targets tough enough to kill one of them usually have plenty of enemies interested in paying for such services. The cambion is also within its rights to offer a discount as it sees fit.

Cambion assassins can be bound to service through a ritual where the person hiring the demon soaks the gold they are paying the contract with in their own blood. Cambion assassins look for any advantage they can get against a target. They will sneak in while their victim is sleeping. They will also cloak themselves and track a target until it's alone and isolated in what it thinks is a safe place. The cambion will appear from out of nowhere to stab its target in the back or slit its throat (even in the middle of a battle). A cambion assassin attacking adventurers in the middle of an open field has either made a huge mistake, or is running interference for a Hellblade to hit the real target while the heroes are distracted.

Cambion Assassins and the Icons

Crusader: Assassins have no place in the Crusader's army. Victory is to be won on the battlefield, not through backstabbing at a trade conference. The soldiers in service to the Crusader prize the blades of cambion assassins. They are primarily meant to be trophies, but some in the Crusader's army use the blades to send a message. Leaving a traitor to die with a cambion blade in their belly illustrates quite well what happens to those who lose their faith.

Diabolist: Cambion assassins who leave the Abyss or a hellhole take themselves far too seriously for the Diabolist's taste. When the cambions are spending their ill-gotten gains, they are perfectly acceptable. But once one swears the Hellblade Oath of Stained Gold, its focus on the mission at hand becomes tiresome. Enemies captured by the Diabolist may find themselves hunted for amusement. Multiple cambion assassins swear themselves to the Diabolist and hunt down her enemies while the icon or members of her retinue place wagers.

Great Gold Wyrm: Cambion assassins are exactly the type of creatures the Wyrm tries to stop from exiting the Abyss. The Wyrm feels pain every time one of them strikes true. If the icon can send agents to protect a target, the target gets protection. This might even extend to individuals who neither want the Wyrm's protection nor trust it in the first place. A master thief wouldn't want a bunch of do-gooder friends of the Wyrm hanging around their operations for very long.

Priestess: Allies of the Priestess often end up as targets of cambion assassins. The cambions enjoy working against the Priestess even though they know they have little direct power to end her reign as an icon. But if there is anyone they would kill for free, those in the Priestess' service would qualify, especially those who meddle in Hellblade business, as the Priestess often does. She may be an icon, but she can't protect everyone all the time. Someone desperate enough to hire a cambion assassin might be willing to take out another contract, even with her previous intervention.

Prince of Shadows: The Prince understands loyalty bought by gold. The other elements of the Hellblade Oath seem excessive, but the Prince always needs someone to wield a silent blade. He never contracts cambion assassins directly, but offers bounties through proxies willing to bleed on their gold. The proxies are often promised much larger favors from the Prince for this service. Delivering on those promises, especially to people foolish enough to bleed on cambion gold, is another matter.

Names

Cambion assassins cobble their names together from those of people they enjoyed killing most. They pronounce their own carefully assembled name with relish, licking their lips at the memory of each contributing kill. This sort of vicious sadism is also common among demons. What truly separates cambions from full demons is their cambion-only ranking system. Each rank takes its name from the size of the cambion's blade, grown on the blood and souls of victims. The higher the rank, the more exotic the blade. This type of preening is exactly what gets on the Diabolist's nerves, but sometimes talent must be coddled.

Adventure Hooks

A Fistful of Blood Gold—A series of apparently natural deaths rocks a city where the adventurers are currently spending time. After some investigation, the heroes discover the dead had connections to two rival thieves' guilds barred from quarreling in the streets by an icon. Each guild turned to a cambion katar that was more than happy to sell poisons to both sides for a tidy sum of gold without the complications of bleeding on it. If the adventurers don't eliminate the cambion subtly, the bloodshed in the city will incite the wrath of the icon.

Blood Gold Problems—Some of the loot the adventurers scooped up is blood gold. The enemy whose hoard the adventurers are looting had an cambion assassin on retainer. The cambion sickle attached to the gold starts killing in the name of the adventurers. Spending the gold only turns control of the cambion over to whoever holds the coins. Will the adventurers find an obscure ritual to purify the gold, find a way to kill the demon, or have to cash in a big favor from an icon?

My First Kill—A down on its luck cambion dirk follows the adventurers looking to score a first kill. Its fee is paltry, but it's mostly useless. During a battle, perhaps thanks to a critical failure roll on an enemy's part, the cambion stumbles into its first kill. Do the adventurers still overlook the demon now that it has useful abilities, or do they put it down and become a target of the Hellblades?

The Lesser Evil—A cambion hellblade approaches the adventurers. The creature has an ambitious plan: No cambion assassin has ever killed an icon before. Doing so would put someone at the top of the Hellblades for sure. It needs their help with the target, possibly an icon that the entire group hates. Will they work with a demon to ensure the fall of an enemy icon? What will they do if the target icon outbids them and turns the ambitious hellblade against an icon they serve?

Centaur

They might save the Empire or they might trample it beneath their hooves. There's a lot of that going around.

People of the Wild

Centaurs cycle in and out of the Dragon Empire. They are extremely rare during periods when the High Druid is weak and much more common when the Druid is strong. As the High Druid's power waxes in the 13th Age, centaur clans have become more common features of the wildlands and the areas surrounding the woods.

Most of the centaurs moving into the Empire come from the southeast, up into and around the Wild Wood. Consequently they are most commonly encountered in the hills between the Bloodwood and the Wild Wood and in the dales south of New Port. If the High Druid is helping defend the Sea Wall and the Empire from attacks from the Iron Sea in your campaign, centaur clans running west of the Blood Wood probably contribute heavily to her efforts.

Horse and Human, Hoof and Hand

Centaurs divide their tribal groups into two general types: those who *choose the hoof* and those who *choose the hand*. This is a cultural and political distinction, a matter of attitude rather than history or ethnicity. *Hoof* centaurs refer to their clans as bands and to their chiefs as "great stallions" or "great mares." Centaurs who *choose the hand* use human labels and refer to their groups as clans.

As a rule, clans are more likely to settle in an area, while bands are more likely to remain nomadic. Bands often use the Koru behemoth trails to travel anywhere they wish around the periphery of the Empire, but hand clan centaurs have been known to do the same. Hoof bands tend to avoid clothing as much as possible, while clans prefer wearing some clothes, though nothing heavy or confining. Centaurs from the clans are most likely to choose to travel to Axis to fight in the arenas, but band centaurs also make that choice. Bands are more likely to get involved in random raids and violent interactions with other people of the Empire. But clans are more likely to get involved in precisely coordinated attacks against their enemies, so regardless of whether they call themselves horses or men, centaurs act much like other humanoids—only faster, tougher, and wilder.

In most campaigns, centaurs from the two viewpoints don't have any problem getting along when they want to. Individuals often marry outside the band/clan, and clans sometimes become bands and bands sometimes become clans, depending on the emergence of charismatic leaders or magical events or instructions from the High Druid. It's the centaurs' nature to change and roam and the High Druid usually avoids picking sides in the centaurs' internal debates.

Centaurs of both sexes who reach old age frequently leave their clan and settle in forests as hermits, druids, or even scholars. There's talk that such elders have finally learned to balance their hoof and their hand, but you won't find centaurs indulging in such comments.

The Third Way

In the 13th Age, some centaurs have decided that it's not enough to stick to the old ways of hoof and hand. Some centaurs say that there is another way, choosing the heart.

Centaur clans that choose the heart are usually quite small compared to the mainstream clans of hoof and hand. They are based upon zealous devotion to an icon, almost always an icon other than the High Druid. Many heart clans choose a villainous icon, like the clan of the centaur lancer devoted to the Lich King pictured on page 36.

Heart clans offer the chance to create extremist centaur groups of nearly any position. Hoof centaurs think this makes the heart clan centaurs even more like humans than the centaurs who choose the hand.

Centaur Lancer

Not all centaur warriors choose to get their hooves bloody. Some prefer lance work.

4th level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Charging lance +10 vs. AC—15 damage, and the target pops free from the centaur

Hit 'em hard: The crit range of the attack expands by 2 and instead deals 20 damage on a hit if the centaur first moves before attacking an enemy it wasn't engaged with at the start of its turn.

Natural 18+: The target is also dazed until the end of its next turn.

Spear +9 vs. AC—13 damage

Natural even hit: The centaur lancer can make a *kick* attack as a free action.

Kick +8 vs. PD (1d2 enemies engaged with the centaur)—The target takes 5 damage and pops free from the centaur.

Harnessed speed: The centaur lancer gains a +4 AC bonus against opportunity attacks.

AC	**20**	
PD	17	**HP 60**
MD	14	

Centaur Raider

Hooves, battle horns, and ruin.

5th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +10

Hoof and weapon +10 vs. AC—15 damage

Natural even hit: As a free action, the centaur raider can move and make another *hoof and weapon* attack against a different nearby enemy (it will take opportunity attacks for moving).

R: Short bow +9 vs. AC—18 damage

Natural 16+: The centaur raider can take an additional move action this turn.

Harnessed speed: The centaur raider gains a +4 AC bonus against opportunity attacks and only takes half damage from opportunity attacks that hit it.

Nastier Specials

Barreling charge: When the escalation die is even, the centaur raider can use a standard action and a move action to make a *sweeping blow* attack against multiple enemies as it moves past them (it will take opportunity attacks). It ends this move and attack unengaged.

Sweeping blow +10 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies)—15 damage, and the target loses its next move action.

AC	**20**	
PD	19	**HP 70**
MD	14	

Centaur Ranger

Four legs, two arms, and one wickedly lethal longbow.

6th level archer [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +13

Twin scimitars +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—10 damage

R: Longbow +11 vs. AC—20 damage

Natural even hit: The centaur ranger can take an additional move action this turn.

Natural 16+: The centaur ranger can make a second (but not a third) *longbow* attack this turn as a free action.

Moving combatant: The centaur ranger gains a +4 AC bonus against opportunity attacks and only takes half damage from opportunity attacks that hit it. When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against it and misses, that enemy takes 10 damage from a counter-attack.

Terrain familiarity: Once each round when the escalation die is odd, the centaur ranger can make use of the area's terrain to its advantage as a free action. It can choose either to gain a +2 attack bonus for its attacks that turn, or to gain a +2 bonus to all defenses against the next attack that targets it by using a flashy or tricky maneuver (leaping off a rock over an enemy, stirring up a hornet's nest near an attacker, etc.). The target of its attack or a creature attacking it when it attempts this stunt rolls a normal save; on a success, the bonus is negated.

Nastier Specials

R: Pinning volley +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)—8 damage, and the target is hampered until the end of its next turn

Natural 18+: The target is stuck (save ends) instead of hampered.

Limited use: 2/battle.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 85**
MD	16	

Centaur Champion

The problem for centaur champions is that not many of their opponents stay alive long enough for the champions to challenge.

Double-strength 6th level leader [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +12

Two-handed sword +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)—20 damage
Champion's challenge: If the centaur champion scores a crit against the target, it can challenge that enemy. If it does, until the end of the battle the champion and the target each take a –4 attack penalty against any target except the other. If the centaur champion dies or challenges a new foe, the old challenge is canceled.

Crushing hooves +10 vs. PD (2 attacks)—13 damage, and the target is vulnerable until the start of its next turn

Hooves and slash: As a standard action, the centaur champion can make a *crushing hooves* attack and a single *two-handed sword* attack (one attack roll) against the same enemy.

Leader of the clan: When the centaur champion engages an enemy, each other centaur ally engaged with that creature can pop free from it.

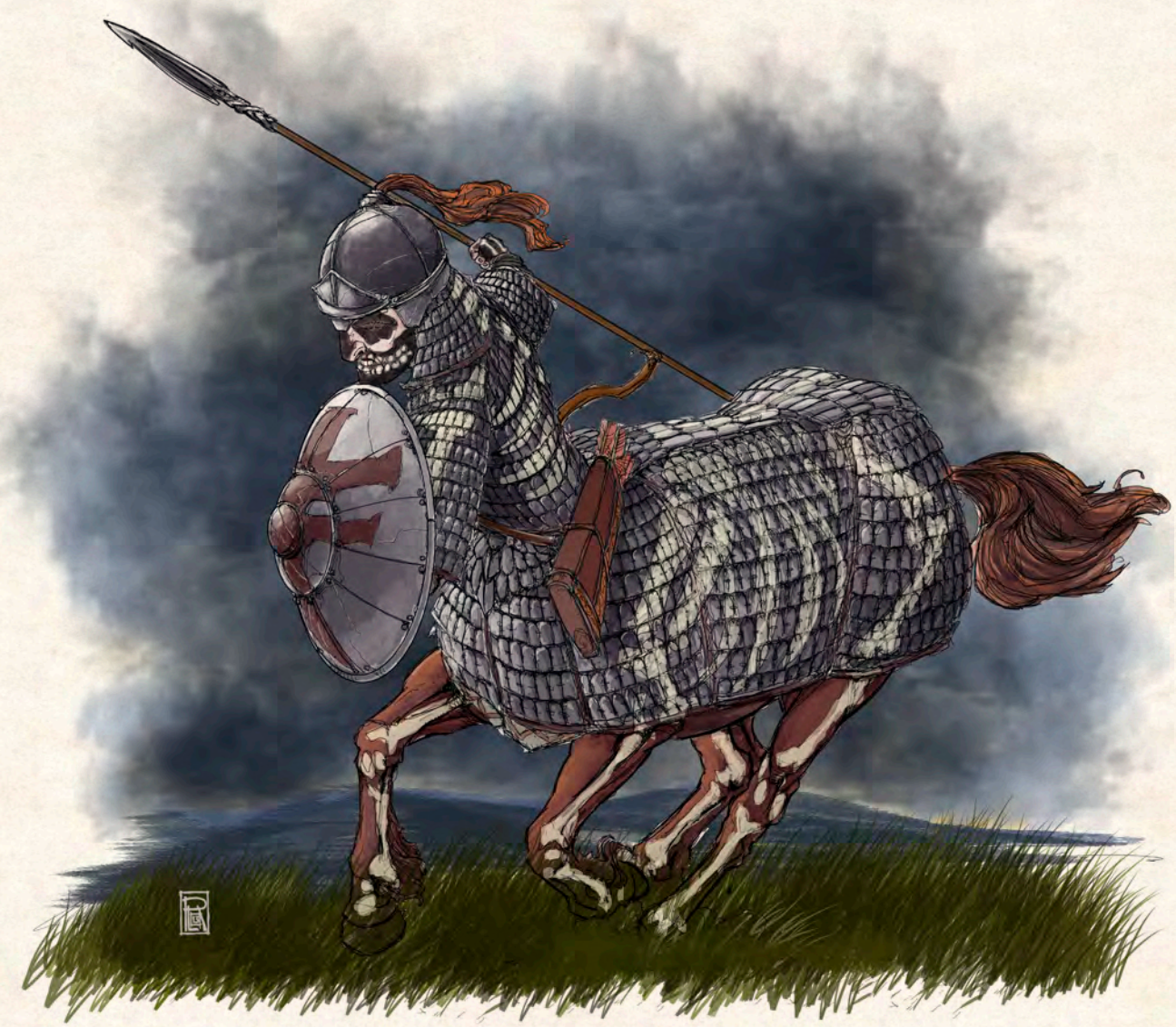
Moving combatant: The centaur champion gains a +4 AC bonus against opportunity attacks and only takes half damage from opportunity attacks that hit it. When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against it and misses, that enemy takes 20 damage from a counter-attack.

Nastier Specials

Chief's challenge: When the champion issues a *champion's challenge*, it only takes a –2 attack penalty against other enemies than its chosen foe, but that enemy still takes the –4 attack penalty. In addition, the champion can use *champion's challenge* as a free action when it becomes staggered.

Champion's scorn: Each of the champion's centaur allies in the battle gains a +5 damage bonus with ranged attacks.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 170**
MD	16	



Building Battles

Centaurs are most often encountered in clans or bands with others of their kind. When raiding, it's not uncommon to find a group of lancers and raiders accompanied by a ranger or two and a champion. The only time multiple champions fight together is when large gatherings of centaurs meet to discuss range rights, to arrange unions, and to make war. At such times the champions will have competitions of skill and wits to see which one is the best warrior. Sometimes the challenge is to see which champion brings down a threat to the band/clan first (like an adventuring party, especially if the centaurs are wild).

Occasionally, centaurs can be found raiding with orcs or hobgoblins, or are encountered on the trail of some fearsome beast. Individual centaur champions and raiders also join with other intelligent humanoids as the leader of the group, or as bodyguards. Centaur rangers will often work with beasts of the wild at the High Druid's request to throw off the yoke of civilization.

Names

Centaurs in clans often have simple names of one or two syllables, such as Aeris, Ayla, Dax, Ember, Nafa, and Patra. Centaurs in bands often have descriptive names such as Old Dreamer, Dancer, Shadow, Third Son, Blood Leaf, Hammer, and Tassel. Making fun of a centaur's name is never a good idea.

Centaurs and the Icons

Crusader: Centaurs who have been burned by the Diabolist find it easy to destroy alongside the Crusader. Whether they have the Crusader's monomaniacal focus remains to be proven, but several heart clans are trying.

Elf Queen: The elves of the Queen's Wood are cool, at best, to marauding centaur bands rampaging down the Koru trails. But elven woods have no trouble absorbing elder centaurs looking for calmer homes that aren't entirely boring, and there are several centaur heroes and magicians who are more at home in the Court than in the Wild Wood.

Emperor: Centaurs' joy in fighting in the arenas and near the Sea Wall makes them something other than outright enemies of the Emperor and the Empire. As more and more centaurs roam on the fringes of the Empire, some individuals who are unhappy with their clans have gone beyond fighting for glory in the arenas and joined the forces of the Empire. So far, centaurs won't serve as normal soldiers, but they will act as officers commanding cavalry. Depending on circumstances, these oddballs might serve as occasionally useful liaisons between the Emperor and the High Druid, or they might only make tensions worse.

> *"The hills thrum with the hooves of barbarians. They breed indiscriminately and fight like demons. If we don't hold the line against the advancing wilderness, then none shall."*
>
> ***—Captain Petraeus, Axis legionnaire***

High Druid: Most centaurs follow or at least respect the High Druid. Most centaurs also have little time for people who would spread roads and towns and urban civilization into what should be wilderness. Consequently centaurs are seldom seen in the Empire's major cities, with three partial exceptions. Concord's forested hills and contoured gardens don't feel especially urban, and centaurs that have chosen to live apart from their clans sometimes live there. Centaurs also feel comfortable in Drakkenhall's ruins. On the other side of the sea, Axis is an occasional destination for centaur champions set on earning glory in the arenas.

Adventure Hooks

Broken Wedding—A clan of centaur raiders carried off a young villager on the eve of his or her wedding. Fearful that the centaurs will abuse or mistreat the youth, the mother of the bride or groom begs the characters to confront the centaurs and rescue her child. But was it a true kidnapping, or did the youth plan to run away to escape a bad marriage? Are the centaurs villains or is one of them in love with the human they rescued?

Diseased and Dangerous—A virulent orc infestation near a centaur homeland has had severe magical effects. The Orc Lord's magic is sometimes more subtle than you'd expect, and a centaur tribe has gone "orcish," spawning orc-like centaurs and ravaging alongside orc warbands. There may be traces of centaur culture still present, and that's where the kidnapped friend or relative or connection of the PCs comes in. Is this a rescue or a war?

Running of the Centaurs—As the PCs are traveling along the Koru behemoth route, or even just crossing it, they get caught up in a race of some sort between rival centaur clans/bands. One or more of the competitors seeks to barter for assistance, probably playing off shared allegiance and connections with an icon. Success in the race could work to the PCs' advantage instead of only being a problem.

> *"Centaurs are tough. The horse and human remain balanced in life, but keeping them balanced in undeath is beyond all but the greatest of us."*
>
> ***—Priary the Cold, necromancer***

Chaos Beast

A creature dripping with the energy of chaos that can barely keep itself together. If the shifting forms, biting mouths, and multiple limbs don't kill you, getting infected with chaos energy will.

A Hundred Hungry Mouths with No Stomach

The chaos beast is a shambling creature infused with an abundance of chaotic energy. Looking at the beast directly is almost painful as it's constantly shifting, twisting, and changing. Mouths open and close continually within its flesh. A chaos beast is a bubbling mass of flesh that barely holds onto its form while the creature remains still. The creature has a strange gelatinous quality to its flesh that is revealed when it moves or attacks. It contains so much chaotic energy that it destabilizes the creatures and the area around it. Attacks inflicted by a chaos beast often cause its victim's form to change, with the severity of the wound determining how bad the change is. The bodies of those killed by chaos beasts are often burned because watching the corpse shift and twitch at the funeral is too disturbing.

The chaos beast gets its name from its general shape. It (roughly) has four limbs, a body, and a head, and is the size of a human. Beyond that, its form changes by the minute. The ends of its limbs become claws, chicken feet, paws, or some combination of them all. It emits a howl that turns into a bird's cry and then a cat's hiss. It moves quickly and attacks with whatever natural weapons it has currently grown. Such attacks disorient trained warriors because the attack often surges out of the creature's flesh, rather than from an obvious limb that can be blocked.

The more dangerous chaos brute is formed by the merging of two lesser chaos beasts, or when a chaos beast consumes enough flesh to grow itself to a larger size. The brute is roughly the size and shape of a bear, but it shifts with every step or movement. The brute gains little in intelligence or cunning, but it makes up for it in size and ferociousness. It has more control over its attacks and varies them more often. This makes the brute more unpredictable. Just when an opponent gets used to one type of attack, the brute changes form and tactics.

The chaos behemoth is the largest chaos beast. Its form is the most grotesque—a shambling mound of limbs, jaws, and flesh. Mouths tear open in its flesh and limbs push through as the creature flows toward a new target. The behemoth is usually the longest lived of the beasts, having eaten enough meat to attain such a large size. Rather than forming striking limbs, the behemoth simply rises up as a wall of howling mouths, tearing claws, and ripping teeth. If that wasn't bad enough, the behemoth is able to directly infect its opponent with the chaos at its core, causing flesh to rebel against flesh.

Chaos glorps are puddles of disgusting flesh waiting to devour enough meat to become really deadly. Chaos beasts larger than behemoths have been rumored, but never confirmed.

Chaos Glorp

It's what's left over when terrible things happen . . . like chaos beasts combining.

4th level mook [aberration]
Initiative: +5

Oozespasm +8 vs. AC—3 ongoing damage, or 10 damage if the target is already taking ongoing damage

Miss (splooshglumpbrekkk): The chaos glorp pops free from all enemies and moves as a free action to engage a nearby enemy taking ongoing damage.

Spontaneous chaos: When the escalation die reaches 6, the chaos glorp rolls a normal save. If it succeeds, it transforms into a chaos beast with full hit points.

AC 17
PD 16 **HP 20 (mook)**
MD 13

Mook: Kill one chaos glorp mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.

Chaos Beast

It's a gurgling, bubbling mess of animal parts and bestial moans. Just looking at it gives you a headache, and the thought of touching the horrid thing makes one hand curl around your weapon while the other covers your mouth.

4th level troop [aberration]
Initiative: +6

Bestial chaos +9 vs. AC—Damage and effect depends on the natural roll

Natural even hit (peckpeckclaw): 7 damage, and the chaos beast can make another *bestial chaos* attack as a free action.

Natural odd hit (slapgushslap): 15 ongoing damage.

Miss (splooshglumpbrekkk): The chaos beast pops free from all enemies and moves to engage a random nearby enemy as a free action, preferably one it wasn't just engaged with.

Chaos combined: Once a chaos beast is staggered, it can combine with another chaos beast next to it as a quick action to become a full-strength chaos brute acting on this beast's initiative. Replace the other beast with a chaos glorp mook.

AC 18
PD 14 **HP 48**
MD 17

Chaos Brute

The flesh rushes together. Mouths become hands. Tentacles become hands. The beast swells in size. The cuts and bruises of the smaller beasts fade away as skin bubbles to cover them.

Large 4th level wrecker [aberration]
Initiative: +8

Brute chaos +9 vs. AC—Damage and effect depends on the natural roll

Natural even hit (stomptearsmash): 25 damage.

Natural odd hit (slapgushslap): 15 ongoing damage.

Miss (shameterrordespair): 1d3 random nearby enemies each take 10 psychic damage.

Chaos combined: Once a chaos brute is staggered, it can combine with another chaos brute or chaos beast* next to it as a quick action to become a full-strength chaos behemoth: the new creature rolls initiative as if it had just entered the battle.

*If a chaos beast and a chaos brute combine to create a chaos behemoth, the behemoth starts with 70 hp instead of 90 hp and takes a –1 penalty to all attacks and defenses.

AC 20
PD 17 **HP 60**
MD 13

"By the gods! Where do I swing? The beasts shift so quickly they hurt my sight! They are on the right! The left! Fire! Fire! Burn the beasts! Burn the town! Salt the ashes!"

—Cosmo Lening, Newton Levee town guard

Chaos Behemoth

The creatures combine again. One huge creature looms over you. Each mouth opens wide enough to envelop a body whole. It howls as its wounds stitch together yet again.

Huge 4th level spoiler [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +5

Behemoth chaos +9 vs. AC—Damage and effect depends on the natural roll

Natural even hit (chompsucktear): 30 damage, and the chaos behemoth can make a *mewhowlwail* attack as a free action.

Natural odd hit (slapgushslap): 25 ongoing damage.

Miss (slopspewbarf): 10 damage, and the target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

Mewhowlwail +9 vs. MD (each nearby enemy)—10 psychic damage, and if the target is taking ongoing damage, saves against that ongoing damage become hard saves (16+)

The betrayal of flesh: When a nearby enemy taking ongoing damage drops to 0 hp or below, add +15 to the amount of ongoing damage that enemy is taking as its body melts and warps. At the GM's option, a creature slain in a battle involving a chaos behemoth might transform into a chaos glorp or chaos beast instead of having the decency to just die.

AC	**21**	
PD	16	**HP 90**
MD	16	

Building Battles

Being creatures of chaos, chaos beasts are often drawn to areas of demonic activity, and while the creatures don't really work with anyone, they seem to avoid attacking demons most of the time. The demons see them as interesting pets and often give prisoners to the beasts to watch the fun once they're done with the unfortunates. Many ogre magi and sorcerers also use the beasts as "muscle" to decimate a foe while the spellcaster stays at range blasting people. For the right price, a buyer can purchase containment crates marked with mystic wards that will hold the beasts for a day or two—the wards can be brought down with a word, of course.

The Domain of Chaos

Chaos beasts will show up in many places. Areas of high traffic in transport often see a manifestation of the beasts. Teleportation circles and abandoned magic gates are popular locations to have beasts prowling about, on one end or the other. Are the beasts caused by teleportation spell misfires? Or are they natural byproducts of the violation of the laws of time and space?

A natural manifestation point for chaos beasts is the underworld; adventurers traveling the dark underways of the world report encountering the creatures roaming the long dark ways, which explains why many living dungeons also contain the creatures. The beasts seem to be able to sense the presence of an approaching dungeon and make sure they catch a ride as it passes, looking for tasty snacks that might also be in the dungeon.

Chaos beasts also love to show up in impossible places. More than one adventuring party has secured a well-defensed camp for the night only to be awoken by the sound of chaos beasts trying to eat the cleric. Superstitious dungeon veterans often leave a chamber door ajar or a shaft slightly unsealed as a defense against a chaos beast manifestation.

Wild spaces are a natural fit for chaos beasts. The edges of known maps and explored areas are a perfect place for chaos beasts to ooze into the world. Many tales tell of explorers' camps found empty, with fires still cooking and equipment laid out. Whether the beasts attack during the night or manifest out of thin air is unknown.

Things Chaos Beasts Eat (and Carry Inside)

Chaos beasts are drawn to gems like children to candy. Loose gems often end up in one of the creature's many mouths. With the gem embedded in the mouth, it soon becomes part of the creature's skin. A deft-fingered rogue can often pry loose the gem before the chaos beast snaps their hand off. The chaos beast is also drawn to gems attached to items like swords and armor.

Helmets and headwear are a favorite choice for chaos beast to slurp up. An errant blow knocks the helmet off the opponent, and the beast scoops it up and ingests it. This is something of a self-preservation move on the part of the chaos beast. If the larger host is slain, a small piece of the beast nests inside the helmet. When an unsuspecting hero puts the helmet back on without proper cleaning, the beast works its way inside the poor victim. A short while later, seemingly out of nowhere, the hero erupts into a chaos beast and the cycle begins anew.

Halflings also draw the attention of chaos beasts. Something about their size and sound lures the beasts into a feeding frenzy. Chaos beasts concentrate their attacks on halflings until some other opponent deals damage to the beast to draw its attention. Halflings that have survived an encounter with a chaos beast know a good strategy is to run away from the creature in circles while their allies pepper it with attacks. Some unscrupulous adventurers have been known to recruit a halfling as bait if they know they are going into an area where they expect chaos beasts.

Rings, like gems, are another treasure that chaos beasts eat while in battle. Chaos beasts have been known to suck magic rings right off the hands of an opponent (sometimes with a finger). When a PC fumbles a roll while facing a chaos beast, any rings they are wearing are lost inside the beast until they can be retrieved. Getting the ring back isn't a pleasant experience. It also never quite feels the same, retaining a slightly sticky feeling from being inside the chaos beast for too long.

"Fighting such a creature is like fighting a rolling wave of angry flesh. If you're out of ranged options, it's best to just wade in and keep cutting the damn thing into halves until there are no more halves to cut. I recommend the hardest liquor you can find, because you're gonna want to wash the taste, smell, and memory of fighting this beast out during your next camp."

—Bernie Barrelsmasher, dwarf fighter

Chaos Beasts and the Icons

Archmage: Something is letting these creatures into our plane of existence. The Archmage would like to know what. Is it common spells? Botched experiments? Willful summoning? His current theory is the other icons are not taking the proper precautions when they dabble in magic above their understanding. His experiments are carefully controlled. While there are accidents, none of them are responsible for such heinous creatures. If he found evidence to the contrary, the Archmage would take the appropriate punitive measures. The beasts should be eliminated, but they could also be studied. Sadly, caging chaos beasts for study seems more or less impossible for those who are not already experienced wizards.

High Druid: It's whispered that a few druids who've completely lost control of their shapeshifting abilities transformed into chaos beasts. True or not, it's definite that the High Druid and her followers hate chaos beasts and the un-nature they represent.

Orc Lord: The transformative nature of chaos beasts interests the Orc Lord. Their use on the battlefield is obvious, but more interesting is how their victims transform into more of the things.

Priestess: The Priestess sees too much suffering because of the beasts and wants them wiped out. She suspects someone is creating them on purpose, be it a dark god or rival icon. If someone can find the source, they can stop the beasts from damaging the innocent. She's decided that using adventurers for this task is the best option. They're tough, they can fend off the chaos beasts' attacks, and they can deal with unexpected challenges. Protecting everyone from the horrors of the beasts, even those who she dislikes, is a top priority.

The Three: The Three aren't responsible for the creation of chaos beasts but they love to watch the havoc the creatures create. Ah, chaos. The Three will insert the creatures into areas where their rivals have strength and watch the beasts consume. They're also not above unleashing a beast into a region important to one of the other Three. Word is that they often tell the sorcerers who upset them that, one day, the sorcerer's luck will run out and they'll be consumed by chaos.

Names

Chaos beasts are also known as rippers, portal hounds, and hungryhearts.

"These creatures have no use for the dead. If the meat isn't fresh, they aren't interested. The smell of rot keeps them away. If you can make it to a graveyard or crypt, the beasts will leave you alone, and you'll likely make a new friend."

—Leelana Free, gnome necromancer

Adventure Hooks

A Foul Turn—The wizard's tower should be a relatively safe place. But something has gone terribly wrong. All the apprentices have been turned into chaos beasts. Only the heroes can reverse the spell, but can they do so without killing the innocents roaming the halls as puddles of flesh?

Friends to the End?—During a battle with a chaos beast, an adventurer recognizes one of the faces formed by the gurgling creature. Was their friend consumed? Are they trapped inside? And, more importantly, is there any way to rescue the poor soul from the clutches of chaos?

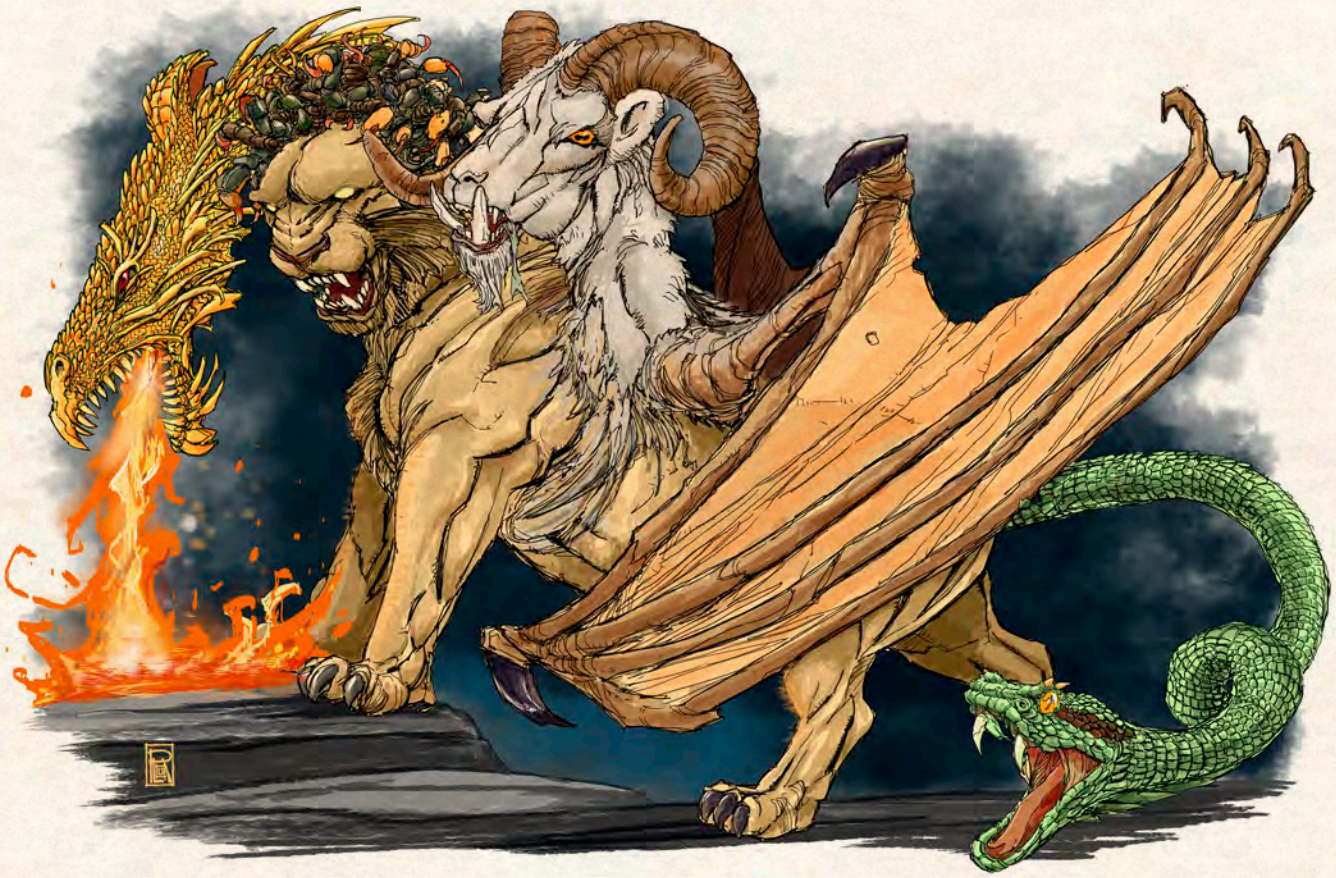
Slimy Spooks—The adventurers are sent to explore a legendary haunted mansion. The mansion isn't haunted, however. A brood of chaos beasts has slithered into the foundation. Their movements cause the creaks, howls, and other usual trappings of an unquiet spirit. So much for the PCs' preparations to face undead. How will the heroes rid the mansion of the foul beasts that seep through every nook and cranny?

The Dying Town—One by one, townsfolk have disappeared. By the time the adventurers arrive, the once thriving village of Widdershin is down to the innkeeper, the blacksmith, and the mayor. A chaos beast has been attacking the townsfolk and adding to its mass of flesh. The central brood holes up in a dry lake bed nearby, but it sends out beasts to attack the adventurers while they stay at the inn.

"When you're a rogue, sometimes stash spots aren't ideal. You've got a few seconds to dump off a jewel or something before the rest of the suckers in your party come around the corner. I've successfully stuffed a guild's cut worth of gems inside one of those beasts. It's gross, but that also means nobody looking for the swag is going to check each of the damn thing's mouths."

—Maria Dozenfingers, halfling rogue

CHIMERA



A terrifying shapeshifting beast. Not only are no two chimeras alike, by sunrise a chimera will have shifted unrecognizably from the form it possessed when it greeted the night.

CHANGELING BEASTS

In the hands of gamers, a beast that's meant to embody shifting chaos has become locked into its original mythic shape of a lion combined with a goat combined with a dragon. We're not going to fight that, not completely. We like the traditional chimera, as presented on page 209 of the *13th Age* core book, and we have some rocking chimera minis we'd like to keep using. But the competing realms of the icons provide powerful winds that a shapeshifting mythical beast might ride to access powers it can't gain on its own. When you fight an iconic chimera, your own icon relationships might enable it to shift into an even more dangerous form, or force it into a shape that gives you the advantage. If all your icon dice work against you and you are fighting a fully empowered iconic chimera, this could be the moment you flee to fight another day when forces are not aligned against you.

ICONIC CHIMERA

The iconic chimera is a mirror for magic, fluidly altering its shape to reflect the great powers of the world. Unlike sorcerers or druids, the iconic chimera's shifts are usually not within its control. Epic heroes eventually learn to recognize how the transformations that surge across the chimera's body reflect the nature of the icons.

Large 8th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +15

Fangs, claws, and horns +14 vs. AC (3 attacks)—25 damage
Natural 14–15: The target is dazed until the end of the chimera's next turn from a headbutt.
Natural 16–17: The target takes 20 ongoing damage from raking claws.
Natural 18–20: The chimera can make a *fiery breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Fiery breath +14 vs. PD (up to 3 nearby enemies in a group)**—3d10 fire damage

Chimerical change: See below.

AC 24
PD 20
MD 17

HP 320

Chimerical Change

At the start of battle each PC rolls one icon relationship die of their choice and one die chosen from their relationships by the GM. A roll of 6 means the chimera has shifted in a manner that gives it a chimerical flaw (F) that the adventurers can exploit. A roll of a 5 indicates that the chimera gains both a flaw and a benefit associated with that icon. A result of 1 or 2 means that the chimera gains the icon's chimerical benefit (B) without the flaw.

Archmage

B *Bearded spell-eating head*: When a spell attack misses the chimera, it has no miss effect and the chimera heals 40 hp.

F *Vulnerability, melee:* The crit range of melee attacks against the chimera expands by 2.

Crusader

B *Skin of indomitable faces:* When the chimera saves against a condition, it becomes immune to that condition until the end of the battle.

F *Vulnerability, spells:* The crit range of spell attacks against the chimera expands by 2.

Diabolist

B *Flaming oil glands:* When a creature is engaged with the chimera at the start of its turn, it takes 20 fire damage.

F *Overconfident predator:* Each time the chimera scores a critical hit, it takes a cumulative –2 penalty to all defenses.

Dwarf King

B *Stone-studded dermis:* Any damage dice that roll maximum damage against the chimera count as 1s.

F *Stubborn beast:* The chimera won't willingly disengage from a creature engaged with it.

Elf Queen

B *Springing stag legs:* When the escalation die is odd, the chimera gains an additional standard action that turn.

F *Overly gracile*: The chimera's form is unusually frail, and any damage dice that roll 1s against the chimera count as 2s.

Emperor

B *Mane of scorpion tails:* The chimera has a *fear aura*: Enemies engaged with the chimera who are below 48 hit points are dazed and can't use the escalation die.

F *Golden fleece:* The chimera has transformed itself into a form that's gem encrusted with golden fur. When slain it will yield 1d6 x 100 gp per adventurer in gems and precious metals. At the GM's say-so, knowledge of this bounty may grant particularly mercenary characters a +1 attack bonus against the chimera once it's staggered.

Great Gold Wyrm

B *Inferno belly:* When the chimera makes a *fiery breath* attack, it can make another *fiery breath* attack that turn as a quick action.

F *Flammable blood:* When the chimera rolls a natural odd miss with *fiery breath*, it takes 20 fire damage.

High Druid

B *Wild heart:* The chimera is constantly evolving and changing. When an enemy rolls a natural 1–5 on an attack roll against it, the chimera adds the escalation die to its attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

F *Vulnerability, poison:* The crit range of poison attacks against the chimera expands by 2.

Lich King

B *Bone plates:* When an enemy rolls a natural even miss with a melee attack against the chimera, the weapon temporarily loses all its bonuses and powers and the wielder is weakened (save ends both).

F *Vulnerability, holy:* The crit range of holy attacks against the chimera expands by 2.

Orc Lord

B *Mighty tusks:* As a standard action, the chimera can make a *tusk charge* attack. It can't make any other attacks the same turn.

Tusk charge +20 vs. AC—100 damage

Limited use: Once the chimera has damaged an enemy with this attack, it can't use *tusk charge* again until it drops an enemy to 0 hp or lower.

F *Too many horns:* The horns and tusks of the chimera lock together at inopportune moments. When it rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack against multiple targets, it loses any further attacks that turn.

Priestess

B *Eagle wings:* The chimera can fly like an eagle, swooping in and out of the battle.

F *Vulnerability, negative energy:* The crit range of negative energy attacks against the chimera expands by 2.

Prince of Shadows

B *Poison fangs:* When the chimera rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack and misses, the target takes 20 ongoing poison damage.

F *Bickering heads:* The first time each turn the chimera hits with an attack, it rerolls the attack and takes the lower roll.

The Three

B *Draconic sinews:* While not staggered, the chimera rolls 2d20 with its melee attacks and uses the higher roll.

F *Too many wings:* Whenever the chimera moves, it rolls an easy save (6+). On a failure, it provokes opportunity attacks from each nearby enemy.

Simplifying Chimeras for Smooth Play

Conceivably you could end up with too many chimerical benefits and flaws for your group's comfort. You're the judge of what you want to handle. If the results are too crazy, use only two benefits and one flaw each turn and switch between the icon abilities you rolled each turn, or each time the escalation die is odd.

Building Battles

Chimeras tend to be solitary, but rather than hunt in a specified territory, they are constantly roving in search of food. This also means that many new types of creatures are added to their mix. Occasionally, the beasts are found in numbers in a living dungeon, hellhole, or other location with strong, chaotic magical emanations. Each chimera stakes out its territory in such a place, but doesn't tend to attack others of its kind, perhaps sharing some link with the place. For that reason, combining chimeras with demons in a battle within a hellhole makes a lot of sense.

Powerful wizards, warlords, and similar types often keep chimeras as pets and guards, and will take samples from the beasts to experiment with upon their followers, yielding strange aberrations (orc with extra arms, giant mutating insects, etc.).

Of course, iconic chimeras are often encountered along with the servants of those icons who use the chimeras, ready to be deployed as a trap or as muscle when needed.

Non-iconic Cousin

The chimera on page 209 of the core book might be a slightly different breed of chimera or it might have started as an iconic chimera but lost its power to change as it grew older. Perhaps the actions of the icons in your game suggest another explanation.

Chimeras and the Icons

Archmage: It has long been speculated that the Archmage created chimeras, because they are creatures that mix magic and flesh perfectly. The current Archmage disclaims all knowledge of their creation, declaring that a previous icon nicknamed "The Sliding Princess" (her true name is apparently forbidden) made them as carriers of her magical essence. The Archmage can't be pressed further on the subject and has had several bestiaries from past ages removed from the shelves of the Grand Library. Rumors abound that wizards who are eaten by chimeras become part of the beasts, their heads resurfacing to consume spells cast at the beast.

Crusader: The Crusader greatly admires the magical beasts, especially the way they can shake off demonic magic that would stun a lesser creature. While he acknowledges that they are unlikely to become mounts for his elite troops, he keeps several as pets and guardians. He even named an elite platoon of hell-divers after them: The Blue Chimeras. Joining the Blue Chimeras is a way to earn rapid promotion, or a quick death in the jaws of the platoon mascot.

Diabolist: The chaotic nature of chimeras appeals to the Diabolist. Campfire tales say that she knows the secret of their creation, that she sends her servants out into the world to capture dangerous beasts and monsters, and that she melds those creatures into chimeras to inflict upon the world. Escapees from Hell Marsh tell of a massive chimera that she is constructing claw-by-claw and scale-by-scale with the intention of unleashing it upon either the Orc Lord or the Dwarf King.

Dwarf King: Chimeras from Hell Marsh have long plagued dwarven lands, and the walls of the mead halls in Forge are decorated with all manner of odd skulls taken from chimeras that made their way into the tunnels. Hunting chimeras has become a rite of passage among some dwarven clans, and a black market in manufactured "chimera" skulls exists to supply young dwarven men and women with a trophy when no real chimera can be found. The Dwarf King approves of this mark of adulthood, preferring it to paying out a bounty from the treasury to hire adventurers to slay the beasts.

Elf Queen: The chimeras of the Queen's Wood are beautiful ephemeral creatures, perfect in their symmetry of form and graceful speed. Their beauty is matched only by their cruelty—a trait surely picked up from the drow who live in and under the woods. The elven nobility hunt chimeras, referring to them as "questing beasts." Often, chimeras in elf lands will lure in prey by pretending to be another type of animal. The elven saying "You are taming a questing beast" means that somebody has dangerously missed the point.

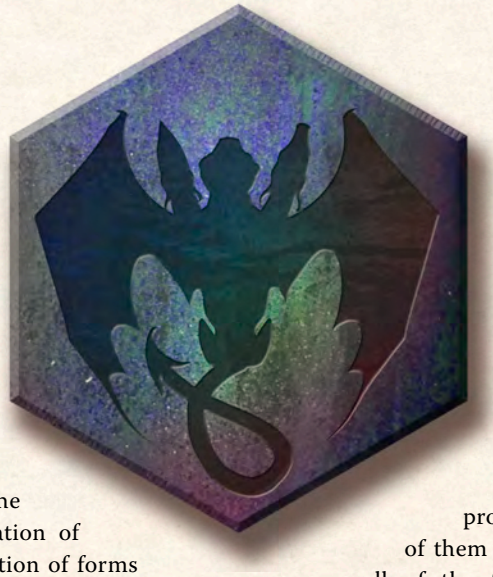
Emperor: The arena mistresses of Axis pay good money for chimeras—a healthy chimera in the gladiatorial arena draws a huge crowd. Some arena mistresses are fortunate enough to have breeding pairs of chimeras in their stables, while others must rely upon adventurers to capture them in the wild and bring them back to Axis (a risky, dangerous business that only a fool or down-on-their-luck heroes would take on).

Great Gold Wyrm: The Great Gold Wyrm has little time to worry about chimeras, having a world to protect from the Abyss, however, his paladins often encounter chimeras in the Red Wastes. A chimera's ability to change its form allows it to survive in harsh demon-infested wastelands with as much ease as the lush forestlands of the Wild Wood. The paladins of the Wyrm regard chimeras as good luck since chimeras often eat imps and other lesser demons, and consider the lion-eagle-snake-headed enemy of my enemy to be a friend.

High Druid: Druids regard chimeras as living embodiments of nature, avatars of primal life. Chimeras in the Wild Wood resemble mighty horned griffons or tusked white lions—majestic and untamable creatures. The druids claim that "pure" chimeras are born from the Wild itself. They believe that the chimeras of Wild Wood are different from other chimeras, claiming that the beast's blood has healing properties similar to those of a healing potion, and that wherever they walk in the Wood, even the most barren soil becomes fertile and instantly sprouts plants.

Lich King: Chimeras can't become undead, the energies that fix a creature in an unchanging necrotic state are anathema to the ever-changing chimera. This fascinates the Lich King and the dread lord has sent his minions out beyond the Necropolis to bring him back chimeras to study. Some fear that chimeras hold the key to the Lich King's plans for the world; an order of watchers based out of Vigil (known as the Sisterhood of Steel) hunt and kill chimeras so that the Lich King can never get a living specimen.

Orc Lord: The Orc Lord's most powerful lieutenant is said to ride a huge beast that changes shape and constantly grows new tusks and snapping jaws—a chimera! No one knows how this mighty orc (or troll, or demon) achieved the feat. Hopefully it's not a secret that can be passed on. . . .



Priestess: Chimeras live on some of the ledges of the Cathedral in Santa Cora, hunting high above the city. The common folk tell tales of those chimeras eating angels, but the truth is that a group of priests keep the beasts, feeding them on lion meat. The priests practice teratomancy, the divination of the will of the gods through the observation of forms that shapeshifting monsters take on. The priests operate in secret, since other residents of the Cathedral will not be amused if this becomes public. The Priestess herself? Who can say how she would react. Are the divinations true?

Prince of Shadows: It's a little known fact outside of Shadow Port that the urine of chimeras contains a compound that, when combined with certain herbs, can produce a potion of shapeshifting. This rare potion is much prized in Shadow Port, since its usefulness in theft and assassination is unparalleled. The common form of the potion allows the drinker to shapechange into another humanoid form for a day, and the more advanced version lets them shapechange into other creatures. A much more difficult version lets the imbiber grow new body parts (such as wings) at will for a short time or can replace lost limbs. Needless to say, the amount of fake shapeshifting potions (usually horse-urine-with-leaves-in-it) for sale in Shadow Port makes finding the genuine article almost impossible.

The Three: The Three have an intelligent chimera by the name of Crimson Rendstheflesh who works for them as an agent. She has mastered shapeshifting beyond anything her more beastly cousins can manage and is able to mimic a horse or a dog or even, with effort and for a short time, a humanoid. Ms. Rendstheflesh believes in a dream of a free and independent monster city, where creatures like her can eat who they want when they want, without worrying about elf hunters or dwarf warriors or being enslaved in the Emperor's gladiatorial arenas.

Fiery Beast?

The chimera we've presented has fiery breath. Why not have an arctic chimera with cold breath, or a chimera on the coast of the Iron Sea with thunder breath, or a mountain-dwelling chimera with lightning breath? It makes sense that chimeras would change their breath attack to fit their environment. Just swap out all mentions of fire for another damage type that fits your story.

Adventure Hooks

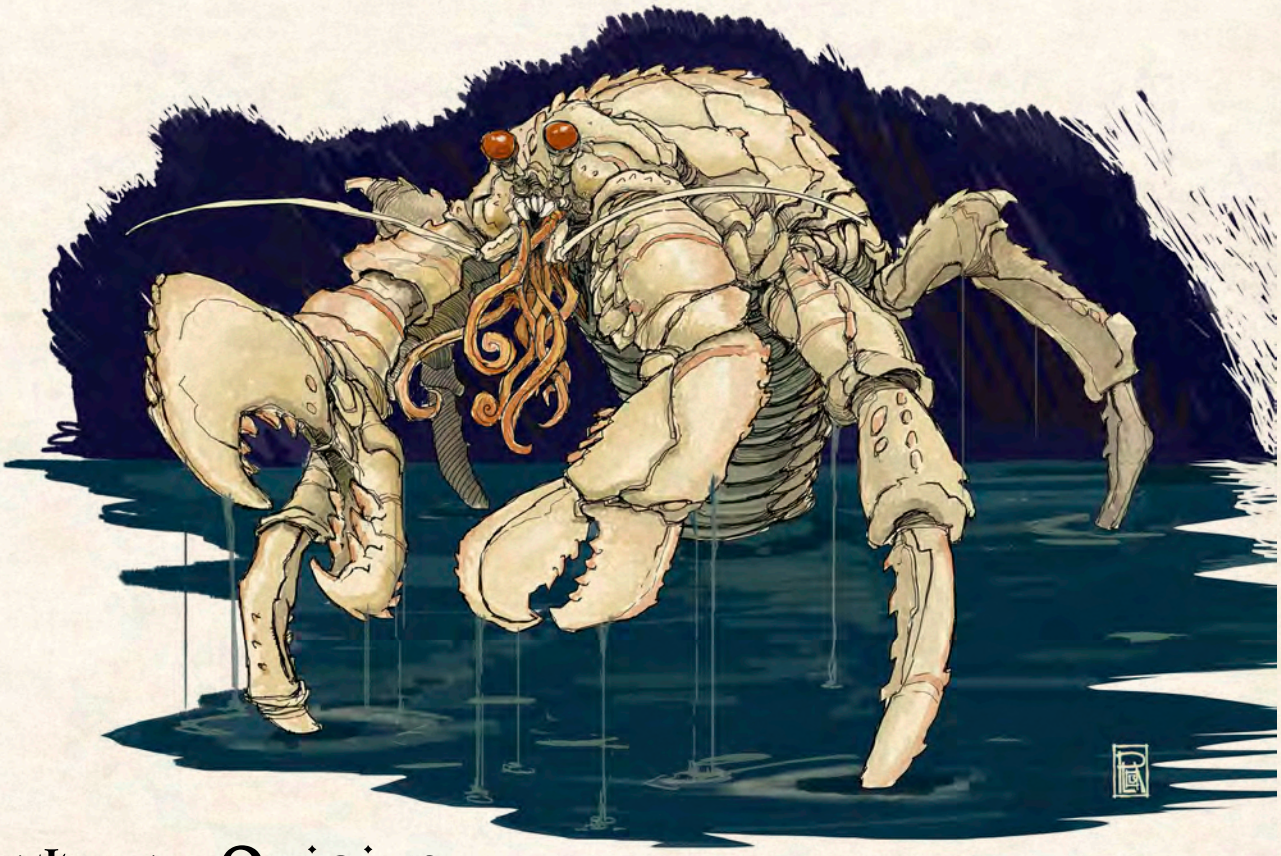
Bring Me the Dragon-Goat Head— The competition among dwarves to prove their adulthood is so fierce that one of them stooped to stealing the head off the back wall of the famed Dragon-Goat Mead Hall. Ruffus Hemsammer, the owner, has shut the mead hall doors and will not talk to anyone until the head is returned. Whoever took it is long gone. In order for the thirsty dwarves to get a drink they must get a new dragon-goat head. Can the adventurers find a chimera and get it to change into a form with a dragon-goat head, remove the head, and bring it back to the dwarves before a riot breaks out?

King for a Day—While the PCs are passing through some woods, a wounded chimera bursts out of the undergrowth and dies at their feet. A short time later a high elf hunting party comes into sight and holds a hurried discussion, unable to agree among them who killed the beast. Eventually, they decide that it must have been one of the adventurers. They tell the adventurers that because they have slain the beast, the slayer will be king for a day as tradition demands and that from the next sunrise to sunset they will rule over the noble elf houses of the forest. While this sounds like an opportunity for feasting (and a feast is promised) it also comes with no real power and will definitely include settling legal disputes, resolving questions of land ownership, and arranging marriages. No matter what the king-for-a-day does somebody will be offended, which is why the elves were so keen to hand the position to the party.

The Halfling Trickster—A halfling by the name of Rodney Dellbouye has built himself quite a business selling beauty creams to the highborn ladies of Twisp and beyond, creams he claims are made from chimera tears. The Prince of Shadows is sending ruffians to collect Rodney's chimera in payment for the many debts he owes. Rodney's problem is that he never had a chimera in the first place. In desperate need of a chimera he turns to the adventurers. He can't pay them with gold, but in his business Rodney has accrued many secrets and he is willing to trade information and high-society contacts in exchange for a living chimera.

Chuul

It takes a special kind of hero to use a magic item hatched in a chuul. The kind who doesn't mind growing extra eyes and antennae.



Unnatural Origins

Chuuls are magical creations, the blending of many species together to create a monster that desires to eradicate all humanoids. Exactly who created them is a mystery, but whoever it was must have had a huge grudge against the rest of the world. Or perhaps they just made a serious miscalculation, because there is something "useful" about chuul—their eggs can be cultured to create magic items. Indeed, some chuul eggs spontaneously hatch into magic items without any prompting. Such living magical items are sought after, growing with their hosts and providing an ever-evolving array of exotic abilities. Living carapace armor, bonded ever-sharp psychic swords, insectile wings, and other strange additions to the humanoid form are among the possibilities (see **Chuul Symbiote Magic Items**).

There are many possible origin stories for chuuls. If your campaign needs one, or several, choose from the following ideas or make up a new one.

- The most likely explanation is that chuulish weapons and items were the progenitor of the chuuls, the original intention being to create living magic items that hatch from eggs. Maybe the first chuuls were aberrations or the result of living weapons crossbreeding, but now only a few eggs from each clutch are likely to produce a living magic item and the rest will produce hateful chuuls.
- A vanquished icon (perhaps the Leviathan) created and unleashed these monsters as a final vengeance, melding magic items and his dying body.
- Chuuls are from another realm of existence, bred as warriors to fight humanoid foes. They were either summoned to the world by a foolish wizard or hitched a ride as eggs with a dimension-hopping prismatic ogre mage. In their nightmarish home realm they are considered heroes.
- Two rival groups of wizards set out to create the deadliest beasts armed with the most dangerous weapons they could conceive of and pitted them against each other in an arena. The island where the arena once stood is now infested with all sorts of mutant monsters. Thankfully the Archmage magically quarantined the island, but not before a batch of chuul egg-sacks floated off on the tide.

Chuuls Are Smart and They Hate You!

Despite their monstrous appearance chuuls are frighteningly intelligent. Their crushing claws mean that they will never hold a pen to write a sonnet, and their burbling roars mean they will never sing a song, but that won't stop them from directing their intellects toward the complete eradication of all humanoid life. They hate the sound of humanoid voices, hate the way humanoids look, and even detest the roads and structures humanoids create. They make little distinction between kobold and high-elf—all humanoid life needs to die.

Chuul Ambushes!

Chuuls are far from rampaging monsters and prefer to ambush their enemies. They pick off single outriders and scouts on trade caravans, knock down trees and damn rivers to force travelers to take routes of the chuuls' choosing, and even set traps. When their humanoid enemies are exhausted and half-starving the chuuls will attack from ambush. Although they don't nurture their eggs, chuuls have a racial memory and are born knowing the best tactics to use to extinguish humanoid lives.

What chuuls like best of all is to stalk a group of humanoids until one or more of them is wounded and trying to take a quick rest, and then strike by surprise. Even if the party has managed to notice the chuuls' ambush (by making skill checks), when one or more chuuls strike during a quick rest, each PC must roll a save; on a success, the characters have already gained the benefits of resting. On a failure, the PCs have not gained the benefit of the quick rest prior to the attack.

Chuul

Lurking in brackish swampland or burrowed under sand this predator strikes suddenly and without warning, choosing to ambush its enemies when they are at their weakest. Chuuls like to attack in pairs and will coordinate with their kind against the hated humanoids.

Large 6th level spoiler [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +11

Crushing claws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)—21 damage
Both attacks hit the same target: The chuul grabs the target.

Crippling tentacles +11 vs. PD—The target is weakened (save ends)
First failed save: The target is hampered and weakened (save ends both).
Second failed save: The target is instead helpless (hard save ends, 16+).
Quick use: This attack only requires a quick action when used against an enemy the chuul is grabbing.

Resist psychic 16+: When a psychic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Water-breathing: Chuuls swim well and can breathe underwater, though they prefer not to.

Nastier Specials

Bite it off: When the chuul scores a critical hit against a weakened or helpless foe, it bites off one of that enemy's hands. An adventurer with no hands might have trouble casting spells or holding weapons. (A cleric might be able to restore the missing appendage with a ritual.)

Fueled by hate: Once per round when the chuul misses with an attack, its next attack that battle deals 4d6 extra poison damage on a hit.

AC	**25**	
PD	18	**HP 126**
MD	18	

"Is it an armored serpent with insectile features and tentacles? Is it a giant multi-segmented crustacean with jellyfish stingers? The answer class, is yes. The real question is who created these monstrous hybrids, and for what purpose?"

—Fistian Belamore, natural philosophy instructor at the Academie Horizon de Artibus Magicis

Chuulish Swarm

A ritual to destroy chuuls forever went badly awry. Now swarms of chuul-parts fly about, each writhing tentacle or snapping claw or spiked carapace-ball a separate winged creature linked into a hive-mind.

6th level troop [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +13

Fly-by tentacle sting +11 vs. AC—15 poison damage
Natural even miss: The swarm can pop free from all enemies, and as a quick action this turn, it can move normally even if it has already moved this turn.
Natural odd hit or miss: The swarm can make a *sharp claws* attack this turn as a quick action instead of a standard action.

Sharp claws +11 vs. AC—10 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage

Flight: The swarm flies fast and is agile, but has a wide turning circle.

Resist damage 16+: When any attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Swarm: This monster is a swarm of chuul body-parts cooperating to attack humanoids. Even though there are thousands of them, treat them as a single creature.

Water-breathing: Chuuls swim well and can breathe underwater, though they prefer not to.

Nastier Specials

Burrow under your skin: When an attacker misses the swarm with a melee attack, that enemy takes 10 ongoing damage.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 80**
MD	16	

Massive Mutant Chuul

Something is unstable in the biology of the chuuls. The beasts that were blended to create the monsters tend to remix once every generation or so.

Huge 10th level wrecker [aberration]
Initiative: +15

Crushing claws +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)—70 damage
Both attacks hit the same target: The chuul grabs the target.
Miss: 35 damage.

Crippling tentacles +15 vs. PD—The target is weakened (hard save ends, 16+)
First failed save: The target is hampered and weakened (hard save ends both, 16+).
Second failed save: The target is instead helpless (hard save ends, 16+).
Quick use: This attack only requires a quick action when used against an enemy the chuul is grabbing.

I hate you all: Once per round when the chuul is engaged with one or more enemies and is the target of an attack, it can try to interpose one of those enemies between itself and the attack as a free action after seeing the attack roll. That enemy rolls a normal save; on a failure, it becomes the target of the attack instead of the chuul. If the chuul tries to interpose an enemy it's grabbing, the save is hard (16+) instead.

Resist psychic 16+: When a psychic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Water-breathing: Chuuls swim well and can breathe underwater, though they prefer not to.

Chuul Mutations: Choose ONE

Exposed brain nightmare aura: When an enemy is engaged with the chuul at the start of its turn, that creature must roll a normal save; on a failure, it's hampered (easy save ends, 6+).

Extra claw: The mutant chuul can make three *crushing claws* attacks instead of two. If two of the attacks hit the same target, the chuul grabs it.

Oversized claw: When the chuul rolls a natural even hit with *crushing claws*, it deals 120 damage instead of 70.

Venom spit: The chuul gains a *venom spit* attack.
R: Venom spit +16 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—40 poison damage
First attack is a natural even roll: The chuul can make a second *venom spit* attack against the same group as a free action.

Whipping tentacles: The *crippling tentacles* attack is now a close attack against 1d3 enemies in a group.

AC 27
PD 25 **HP 450**
MD 22

Building Battles

Chuuls never ally with other humanoid creatures, they hate them too much. Sometimes they will enter the fray when two opposing groups are battling, striking out at both sides. They have been known to work with giant ants, giant scorpions, giant crabs, and similar insect-like creatures, being able to communicate with the creatures on some basic level.

Chuuls and the Icons

Chuuls hate all humanoids with a psychotic passion and won't even deal with non-humanoid emissaries of the non-draconic icons. The Three occasionally send non-humanoid emissaries to the chuuls, but they don't allow chuuls near Drakkenhall (the city is full of humanoids). The Great Gold Wyrm works to protect humanoids, and chuuls consider him an enemy. Chuuls hate everybody and everybody hates chuuls.

Names

Chuuls have no names, but if asked one might rasp, "*I . . . am . . . death!*" and then try to kill you.

What Might Be Found in a Chuul's Territory?

Pile of gold coins on a tree stump, obviously intended as a lure. Collection of humanoid feet arranged on a dead tree's branches. Clearing with humanoid heads on spears. Huge rock painted red with humanoid blood. Wreckage of a wagon, stomped flat and scattered about. Deep pit with orc corpses at the bottom, starved by the chuul for amusement value. Rock carved by chuul claws to resemble a tortured dwarf. Hands nailed with swords to a cave wall. Clutch of chuul eggs about to hatch into infant chuul or chuulish magic items.

Chuul Symbiote Magic Items

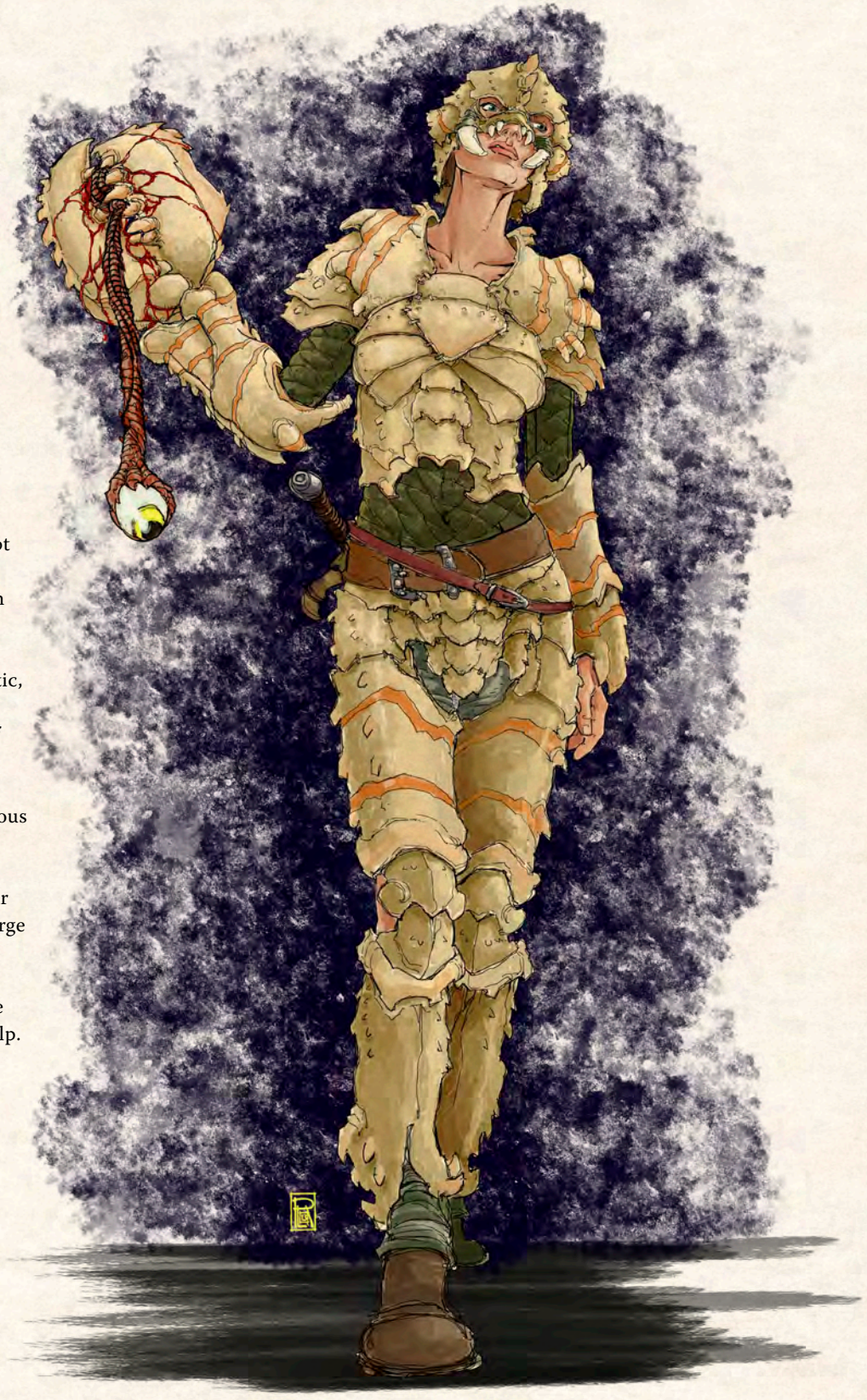
Chuul don't use magic items. Their claws crush things, they are already armored, they can't wear rings, etc. Items made from still-living chuul flesh or hatched from chuul eggs—living weapons and armor—are the true treasure of the chuuls.

Appearance: All chuulish weapons are made of bone and shimmering green-black carapace and have a distinctly organic look and usage: studded with insectile eyes and lined with supernaturally sustained flesh that integrates tentacle-like ganglia and circulatory systems with those of the wielder. Those who choose to attune a chuulish item find themselves growing vein-sphincters and spiracles in their flesh to accept the writhing external organs of the magically warped chuul. Removing a chuulish item from its host isn't as simple as just stealing it—sometimes surgery is required.

Quirks: Chuul-derived items are symbiotic, weaving their flesh with the flesh of their wielder. Instead of affecting the personality of the wielder, their quirk is that they warp the wielder's body in minor yet often disturbing ways. Over-attuning causes obviously monstrous mutations that are hard to hide.

Chuulish Recharge: Chuulish items draw life energy and vital essences directly from their hosts. Any chuul-derived item that has a recharge has the following *chuulish recharge* rule.

The item has a recharge roll like normal magic items, but it's easier to recharge it if the user is willing to use their own life force to help. These items recharge normally on 16+, or on 11+ for a cumulative –1 penalty to all saves until the next full heal-up, or on 6+ for a cumulative –2 penalty to all saves until the next full heal-up, or recharge without a roll for a cumulative –3 penalty to all saves until the next full heal-up.



Symbiotic Items

Chitin Claw (ring). This fleshy multi-eyed loop sheaths a finger in sharp carapace. *Always:* When you pick a lock, disarm a trap, or otherwise perform a task that having a tiny shape-changing blade and tiny eyes attached to your finger would be aided by, you gain a +2 bonus to the roll. *Quirk:* Gnarled over-long fingers on that hand.

Chuul Helm (helm). This insectile segmented helm is lined with ganglia that link with your brain. *Always:* +1 MD (adventurer); +2 MD (champion); +3 MD (epic). *Chuulish recharge:* You gain *resist psychic 12+* until the end of the battle (champion: *resist psychic 16+*; epic: *resist psychic 18+*). *Quirk:* Bone-ridged holes in skull.

Chuulish Cuirass (heavy armor). The many eyes and symbiotic nervous system in this torso armor give you warning of danger. *Always:* +1 AC (adventurer); +2 AC (champion); +3 AC (epic). *Chuulish recharge:* You gain a +4 bonus to all defenses against ranged attacks until the end of the battle. *Quirk:* Over-large protruding ribs.

Clawed Tentacles (gloves). These claw-covered tentacles normally reside under the skin of the forearm, completely concealed. *Chuulish recharge:* Choose an enemy engaged with you. Until the end of the battle, whenever that enemy tries to disengage from you or pop free from you, it must first succeed at an easy save (champion: normal save; epic: hard save). *Quirk:* Tentacles writhe in and out of the skin unexpectedly.

Death Claw (gloves). A lobster-clawed gauntlet that fits over your forearm. The eyes at the fleshy joints blink unnervingly. *Chuulish recharge:* Reroll a missed melee attack with a +1 attack bonus (champion: +2; epic: +3). *Quirk:* The claw flexes and snaps reflexively when wearer is excited.

Evil Eyes (gloves). This gauntlet has eyes on the knuckles, aiding archers and spellcasters. *Always:* Bonus to attacks and damage with ranged attacks: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic). The bonus doesn't stack with bonuses from magic weapons or implements. *Chuulish recharge:* Until the end of the battle or for five minutes, you can see the unseen. Invisible creatures are visible to you, and you spot illusions for what they are. *Quirk:* Bone ridges and oddly patterned callouses on the arms.

Glandular Parasite (cloak/mantle). The parasite sits along your spine, feeding off your life force but also dampening your reactions to extreme stimuli and pain. *Always:* +1 PD (adventurer); +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic). *Chuulish recharge:* You are immune to fear effects until the end of the battle or for five minutes. *Quirk:* Strangely pronounced spine.

Implanted Aventail (light armor). The symbiote is normally hidden. When commanded, a wave of small crab-like creatures pours out of concealed gill-like openings in your skin, providing you with scale-like armor. *Always:* +1 AC (adventurer); +2 AC (champion); +3 AC (epic). Unleashing the armor is a quick action, and you retain the AC bonuses as long as it is in place. When the insects are retracted as a move action, you don't appear to be (or count as) wearing armor. *Quirk:* Gill-like slits cover body even when the armor is not up.

Neural Blade (any bladed weapon). A boney blade with a spine and brain. *Always:* Bonus to attacks and damage: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic); and the weapon deals psychic damage. *Chuulish recharge:* Choose a nearby enemy. That enemy is now vulnerable to psychic damage until the end of the battle. *Quirk:* Large sphincters on arm where the ganglia-tentacles from the blade's hilt insert themselves.

Growing Horror

If you prefer your game to not revolve around quests for magic weapons, want to have some body-horror in your game, or just think living items are cool, then use this optional rule.

Chuulish items: Chuulish items grow and breed in the warm wet bodies of adventurers and other extremely high powered individuals—not simple folk. Each time an adventurer attuned to a chuulish item levels up, they must roll a d12. A roll below their new level means that their body grows another chuulish item for them to use. A roll above their new level means they don't receive a new item. A roll that matches their new level means they spend the next 2d6 hours in agony as their body extrudes a cluster of pulsing, soft-shelled chuul eggs, and perhaps worse . . .

There are some who suspect that the reason the chuul survive as a species is due to power-hungry fools filling their bodies with chuulish items and being careless with the eggs that they "lay."

Neural Whip (light one-handed melee weapon). A tentacle snakes one end around your arm, inserting filaments beneath the skin. The whip stretches and flexes at your mental command, the tip studded with hardened pulsing nerves. *Always:* Bonus to attacks and damage: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic). *2/battle:* You can use a reach trick with the whip (*13th Age* core book, page 44), and the attack deals psychic damage. *Quirk:* Grows eyes in unusual places.

Rachis Girdle (belt). The pulsating band of chuul-flesh inside a bony cage sits on your lower back, exchanging blood and injecting substances into your organs. *Always:* Increase your maximum hp by +4 (champion: +10 hp; epic: +25 hp). Whenever you take ongoing damage, reduce that damage by your level. *Quirk:* Odd gait from reconfigured pelvis.

Rasping Greaves (boots). A carapace covers each of your legs and has an unblinking armored eye on the knee. Unfolding blade-like appendages whip out at those engaged with you. *Always:* When you make an opportunity attack, the target takes +1d6 extra damage on a hit (champion: +2d8; epic: +4d10). *Quirk:* A billow-like lung inside each greave makes a breathing sound.

Strider Symbiote (cloak/mantle –champion tier item). This living "backpack" clings to you with tentacles and inserts mouthparts into the top of your spine. The segmented limbs of the strider usually lie flat against your body but may be commanded to spring out and carry you like a long-legged spider. *Always:* +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic). *Chuulish recharge:* Until the end of the battle or for five minutes, you can move on walls or ceilings as easily as you do across the ground. (epic: chuulish recharge starts at 11+) *Quirk:* Twitching antenna.

Xenoteros (cloak/mantle). Insectile wings hide in slits under the always itching skin of your back. *Always:* +1 PD (adventurer); +2 PD (champion); +3 PD (epic). *Chuulish recharge:* As a standard action, you can fly clumsily for one round (champion: 1d3 + 1 rounds; epic: 2d4 rounds). *Quirk:* Insectile mouthparts grow at the back of the throat and squiggle out when wearer talks excitedly.

Chuulish Slaves

Some living chuulish items cause their hosts to mutate into monsters resembling bipedal chuul. Such chuulish slaves act as mentally dominated intermediaries between the chuul and the outside world. A chuul can't walk into Drakkenhall to purchase trap-making supplies, but a shambling figure in a cloak can. Such slaves are barely tolerated and eventually most are torn apart by their disgusted chuul owner—even a shambling leaking mass is too humanoid for chuul to tolerate for long.

Chuulish Slave

It was once an adventurer just like you, until it over-attuned to chuulish magic items.

4th level troop [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +9

Misshapen claws +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)—7 damage
Both attacks hit the same target: The chuulish slave can make a *writhing tentacles* attack against that target as a quick action this turn.

Writhing tentacles +9 vs. PD—The target is weakened (save ends)

Chullish Slave Mutations: Choose ONE
Chitinous plates: The slave gains a +2 AC bonus.
Acid saliva: The *writhing tentacles* attack also deals 10 acid damage on a hit.
Poisonous blood: When a melee attack hits the chullish slave, the attacker takes 10 poison damage.
Grossness: The slave is a large blob-like mess. It has 72 HP but takes a –2 penalty to all defenses.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 54**
MD	14	

Adventure Hooks

For the Cause—The Crusader is putting together an elite unit with special privileges. To join you need to be host to at least one chuulish weapon. A lieutenant of the Crusader suggests the adventurers join the elites and knows where a chuul is likely to lair so they can obtain their chuulish weapons. Unfortunately, the lair houses a massive mutant chuul, so this raid is loot-and-scoot instead of stand-and-fight.

Fresh Adventurers—A cloaked stranger (a chuulish slave) promises the adventurers a great reward if they will wear disguises as non-humanoids and deliver a message to a chuul. It's a setup of course; the slave gets to feast upon the bodies of the adventurers after the chuul has killed them.

The Diversion—As the characters escort a trade caravan through the Bitterwood they are constantly forced further and further off the beaten path. The bridge is out, the road is destroyed, the woods are on fire, etc. Soon the caravan is lost, most of the mules are missing, and scouts don't return . . . the chuuls are whittling away their prey. Someone in the caravan is a chuulish slave in disguise, but who?

To Blave—A wounded chuul is on the path ahead, seeming "mostly dead" with many spears stuck deep in its flesh. Totally hidden just behind the party as they spot the chuul are chuulish swarms waiting for the tougher warriors to move forward so they can take out any weaker clerics, wizards, hirelings, etc. that are left behind. The chuul really is wounded, though not as badly as it looks. The chuul wounded itself to act as decoy—it hates humanoids that much!

COUATL

Some monsters exist to fight, to feed, to dominate, or to destroy. Couatls exist to remind the icons that reality may be more complex than what they've made of it.

Snakes Flying on a Higher Plane

Couatls usually live in the overworld, the realm of cloud landscapes, the giants' fortresses, the mountain peaks that flow into astral mountains, the high dragons' spheres, and occasionally among the stars. While they're strongly connected to the power of the icons, couatls' personal magic tends to twist that power into unexpected shapes, something like the way a black hole twists gravity and time in our own universe.

Couatl

The couatl doesn't want your soul. It wants you to use your soul in interesting ways that would not have occurred to you. Or anyone else.

Large 8th level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +14

Rippling scales +13 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with it)—10 damage, and the couatl must pop free from the target
Quick use: This attack only requires a quick action (once per round) to use.

Serpent strike +13 vs. AC (one dazed, confused, staggered, or stunned enemy)—60 damage, and 20 ongoing poison damage

R: Forked devastation +13 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—50 damage of the following type (couatl's choice): fire, holy, or lightning
Natural even hit or miss: The couatl can make a *forked devastation* attack against a different enemy as a free action.

Resist holy and poison 16+: When a holy or poison attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Flight: Couatls fly and hover so smoothly on their multi-colored wings that other flyers get jealous.

Cyclic escalator: When the escalation die is even, the couatl adds the escalation die to its attack rolls.

Nastier Specials

Ever-rippling: The couatl can use more than one *rippling scales* attack during its turn.

Flee: Once per campaign, the couatl can take a "campaign loss" similar to the PC-oriented flee special action (*13th Age* core rules, page 166) to escape from certain death, along with its allies.

One or two icon-centric abilities: Choose each appropriate ability from the **Icon-centered Abilities** list after the elder couatl entry.

AC 24
PD 21
MD 21

HP 300

GAMEMASTER

Elder couatls have much the same range of abilities as normal couatls, but they definitely have at least one icon-centric attack power and their forked devastation attack has an effect when it generates an odd hit. Their version of using the escalation die is also improved over normal couatls, adding the die to saves as well as attacks when it is even.

Elder Couatl

The couatls' mischievousness and sense of whimsy grow alongside their pride.

Large 11th level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +16

Rippling scales +17 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with it)—25 damage, and the couatl must pop free from the target
Quick use: This attack only requires a quick action (once per round) to use.

Serpent strike +17 vs. AC (one dazed, confused, staggered, or stunned enemy)—110 damage, and 40 ongoing poison damage

R: Forked devastation +17 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—90 damage of the following type (couatl's choice): fire, holy, or lightning
Natural even hit or miss: The couatl can make a *forked devastation* attack against a different enemy as a free action.

Cyclic salvation escalator: When the escalation die is even, the couatl adds the escalation die to its attack rolls and saves.

Flight: Couatls fly and hover so smoothly on their multi-colored wings that other flyers get jealous.

One or two icon-centric abilities: Choose each appropriate ability from the **Icon-centered Abilities** list after the elder couatl entry.

Resist holy and poison 16+: When a holy or poison attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Nastier Specials
Ever-rippling: The couatl can use more than one *rippling scales* attack during its turn.
Flee: Once per campaign, the couatl can take a "campaign loss" similar to the PC-oriented flee special action (*13th Age* core rules, page 166) to escape from certain death, along with its allies.

AC 27
PD 24 **HP 600**
MD 24

Icon-centered Abilities

In addition to their standard abilities, each elder couatl (and some 8th level couatls) has another ability or attack (sometimes even two) that flows from the power of the icon or icons they are presently associated with. Memory keeper couatls who are associated with icons that no longer exist should be given whichever ability or attack that seems right. Alternatively, make up a new ability/attack that suits the former icon you've created and share it with us online at **pelgranepress.com**.

Abilities that increase a couatl's attacks and defenses are more interesting if they have magical manifestations that let the PCs know what's going on—characters with certain icon relationships may have trouble with specific couatl.

Archmage
8th level
C: Striking comets +13 vs. PD (each nearby creature)—40 damage
Natural even miss: The target is dazed (save ends).
Natural odd miss: 20 damage.
Limited use: 1/battle, when the escalation die is 2+.

11th level
C: Comet strike +17 vs. PD (each nearby creature)—70 damage
Natural even miss: The target is weakened (save ends).
Natural odd miss: 35 damage.
Limited use: 1/battle, when the escalation die is 2+.

Crusader
The couatl gains a +1 bonus to AC and PD. In addition, all the couatl's melee attacks deal half damage when they miss.

Diabolist
Roll a d6 and a d8 on the Random Demon Ability table on page 209 of the *13th Age* core rules. If you get the same result, reroll the d8 until you have two *different* demonic abilities for the couatl.

Dwarf King
Secretly roll a d6 at the start of each battle. If the roll is odd, the PCs can't use any of their magic items' powers when the escalation die is odd this battle. If the roll is even, the PCs can't use their magic items' powers when the escalation die is even this battle. Default chakra bonuses still function, but powers don't. And for the fun of it, once they've been powered off for a turn, all the PCs' magic items will be freaking out and creating roleplaying havoc by forcing their quirks to the forefront for the rest of the battle.

Elf Queen
At the start of each battle, the couatl gains 1d4 elven racial powers of its choice: *cruel*, *elven grace*, *highblood teleport*, and yes, the half-elf's *surprising*. Feel free to tell the couatl that the half-elves aren't really elves, but it will just smile at you beatifically and say something like, "That's not what the Elf Queen said the last time we shared tea."

Cruel (borrowed from the Silver Folk)

Once per battle, deal ongoing damage to a target you hit with a natural even attack roll as a free action. The ongoing damage equals 5 times your level. (For example, at 3rd level you would deal 15 ongoing damage against a single target.) As usual, a normal save (11+) ends the damage.

A critical hit doesn't double this ongoing damage.

Highblood Teleport (liberated from the high ones)

Once per battle as a move action, place yourself in a nearby location you can see.

Elven Grace (thanks, woodsy elves)

At the start of each of your turns, roll a die to see if you get an extra standard action. If your roll is equal to or lower than the escalation die, you get an extra standard action that turn.

At the start of battle, you roll a d6. Each time you successfully gain an extra action, the size of the die you roll increases by one step on the following progression: (d4), d6, d8, d10, d12, d20. If you get an extra action after rolling a d20, you can't get any more extra actions that battle.

Surprising (couatls love surprises)

Once per battle, subtract one from the natural result of one of your own d20 rolls.

Emperor

The couatl gains a +4 bonus to MD. It also gains a +2 bonus to attacks and to all defenses against each PC who has one or more icon relationship points with the Lich King or Orc Lord.

Great Gold Wyrm

The couatl gains a +1 bonus to attacks and to all defenses against each PC who has one or more icon relationship points with the Diabolist or the Three. In addition, the couatl can use the following attack once per battle.

8th level

C: Golden dragon breath +13 vs. PD (2d4 nearby enemies)—50 fire damage

Miss: Half damage.

11th level

C: Golden dragon breath +17 vs. PD (2d4 nearby enemies)—90 fire damage

Miss: Half damage.

High Druid

The couatl gains a +2 bonus to attacks and to all defenses against each PC who has one or more icon relationship points with the Archmage or Emperor. In addition, the couatl regenerates 10% of its maximum hit points at the start of its turn when the escalation die is even and it has taken damage.

Lich King

The couatl gains a +2 bonus to attacks and to all defenses against each PC who has one or more icon relationship points with the Emperor. In addition, all PCs take a –4 penalty to death saves this battle.

Orc Lord

The couatl gains a +4 bonus to PD. It also gains a +2 bonus to attacks and to all defenses against each PC who has one or more icon relationship points with the Dwarf King or Elf Queen.

Priestess

8th level

C: Visions of a higher plane +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—30 psychic damage

Natural even hit: The target is confused (save ends).

Natural odd hit: The target treats the escalation die as if it was 0 (not in effect) for its attacks and effects (save ends).

11th level

C: Visions of a higher plane +17 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)—50 psychic damage

Natural even hit: The target is confused (save ends).

Natural odd hit: The target treats the escalation die as if it was 0 (not in effect) for its attacks and effects (save ends).

The Three

Intermittent dragon breath: A couatl can use *dragon breath* 1d3 times per battle, but never two turns in a row. The couatl's personal relationship with the Three determines whether the damage is acid, fire, or lightning.

8th level

C: Dragon breath +13 vs. PD (2d3 nearby enemies)—36 [energy] damage

Miss: Half damage.

11th level

C: Dragon breath +17 vs. PD (2d3 nearby enemies)—70 [energy] damage

Miss: Half damage.

Building Battles

Unlike most outright monsters, couatls rarely aim to fight to the death against PC-style opposition. If they must fight against would-be heroes, they'd prefer to take the heroes hostage and coerce or convince them into implementing the couatl's long-term plans. Therefore most of a couatl's allies need to be intelligent and flexible enough to avoid outright slaughtering all their opposition. Humanoid allies are fine, but smaller or slightly weaker dragons make the best companions for couatls, since they can keep up wherever the couatl flies, flees, or invents truly cunning plans.

Couatls and the Icons

As shown by the fact that they typically possess at least one icon-centered ability or attack, couatls care deeply about the icons. As glorious eccentrics, however, individual couatl often care about the icons in ways that mortals in the worlds beneath the clouds can't. Individual couatl have all manner of relationships, loyalties, and relationships with icons and the icons' organizations. The notes that follow can be treated as a sample—if there are other odd affiliations that work in your game, use them.

Memory Keepers: If there are stories about vanished icons that you wish to loose upon your campaign, couatls may be the messengers.

Some couatls have remained true to the icon that first gained their loyalty, even when that icon is no longer in existence. The power of the couatl hold-out is that in its immediate vicinity, the world functions to some extent as if its icon were still alive. A couatl who has remained true to an ancient and vanished icon may have a small coterie of mortal (or even immortal) followers who share the couatl's reverence.

We could offer a dozen vanished icons that hold on in the world only via the memory of a specific couatl. But this seems like the type of invention that belongs on each GM's plate. All our fantasy worlds offer candidates. Choose loyalties that suit your campaign and your players' stories. If there are icon stories you'd like to experiment with but don't want to incorporate into the modern age, couatl memory keepers provide a path.

When in the presence of a couatl *memory keeper*, mortals can have icon relationships with an icon that doesn't really exist anymore. How *does* that work? It's usually not going to work out well for most PCs, but you can imagine a rogue with the Smooth Talk talent or a Balladeer bard extemporizing ways of interacting with icons who are only briefly present.

Couatl of the Great Synthesis: As feathered serpents, couatls embody improbable combinations. Many couatls straddle impossible contradictions by asserting that the powers and portfolios of two (always precisely two) quite different icons are reflections of the same underlying reality. While it's patently false to most everyone else that the Lich King is the Emperor, or that the Archmage is the Elf Queen, or that the High Druid is one or all of the Three, *great synthesis* couatls manage to live as if their specific synthetic notion were true. And so long as a *great synthesis* couatl is not staggered, their particular heresy/alignment/pairing of two separate icons *is true* in their immediate vicinity.

Reality isn't supposed to be mutable this way, not according to the gods, the icons, and most of the beings of the lower worlds. But *great synthesis* couatls can prove quite ably that they are indeed correct, and whatever world you happen to inhabit when you go away from them, well, what makes you think that's as real as the heightened reality around the couatl?

Where PCs are concerned, being around a *great synthesis* couatl should open up plot options that would otherwise remain closed and locked. A PC with a relationship with one of the icons should be able to use their relationship points with the other icon of the pairing when around the couatl . . . and that's the minimum effect.

At least once in a campaign that involves heavy *great synthesis* reality-bending, feel free to have an NPC's head literally explode from the contradictions splatted upon them as obvious truth.

Seasonal Affiliations: Some couatls have served (or been amused by) several different icons in the course of their centuries of life. A few such couatls actually change their allegiances according to a seasonal calendar that relates to a type of time that can only be measured in the overworld. To mortals, it appears that these couatls are flighty traitors. To couatls, mortals are stuck viewing just a fragment of the big picture.

Reputation for Good: Overall, couatls are much more attracted to heroic and ambiguous icons than to villainous icons. Some cynics suggest that this doesn't reflect true discernment on the part of the couatls, only that there are more heroic and ambiguous icons to go around and that the couatls' affections are distributed randomly.

The actions of apparently lawful good couatls can be extremely surprising when their current synthesis is to assert the congruity of, for example, the Great Gold Wyrm and the Orc Lord.

What we're suggesting is that rather than treating couatls as reliable agents of a monolithic notion of "lawful-good," treat them as bizarrely unpredictable interpreters of laws you'd have to be a couatl to perceive as consistent. Good? Sure . . . mostly. Lawful? Maybe, if it's a set of laws only the couatl understands.

Of course a *great synthesis* couatl joining the Archmage and the Great Gold Wyrm might be pretty darn lawful. Scary as heck, but definitely lawful.

There's another sense in which couatls are more lawful than not: hardly any of them have anything to do with the Prince of Shadows. The Prince is outside their favor and ability to work into a synthesis, but that doesn't mean they are powerless against the icon. They just prefer their style of change to the Prince's style. Of course, there may be more to the story than that, but that's for your campaign to figure out.

Bossy, Big, and Brassy

Couatls believe they are the central heroes of the world. To couatls, the PC heroes aren't such hot stuff.

A couatl who takes an active dislike to the PCs can amount to big trouble. But the alternative isn't that great either. A couatl who *likes* the PCs and wants to tell them exactly what to do may also be big trouble, especially when the couatl's version of reality doesn't translate outside its home pocket of the overworld.

Overworld Flyers

Unlike say, cloud giants, dragons, and angels, couatls make themselves at home through the many layers of the overworld. They seem to know all the access points for the various worlds. If you can talk them into it, they make great guides. The problem is that they get bored quickly and believe that anyone who got into the overworld should be able to get themselves out.

Colors

Historically, in previous ages, couatls had rainbow-colored wings. In the 13th Age, their wings often appear rainbow-colored at first, but gradually shimmer and shift until the viewer sees colors that match the couatl's present icon associations.

The Parliament

Records of previous ages indicate that all of the world's couatls formerly gathered at irregular intervals to debate as a Parliament. The last such Parliament seems to have ended an age, but the details are fuzzy. Couatls who will talk about their Parliament say that the lorekeepers have confused cause and effect. They say the Parliament *followed* the end of an age rather than preceding it, much less *causing* the end.

If the couatls were to convene a Parliament, or even plan to convene a Parliament, the icons and anyone else who cares about the balance of power would probably take their plans extremely seriously. "Parliaments" are probably not a common feature of the pseudo-Renaissance worlds of our campaigns, but even those unfamiliar with the concept of a parliament can tell that the couatls' version involves attempts to sway other couatls to new points of view. Such arguments could have serious ripple-down effects even if they didn't involve reality-twisting effects like the combination of multiple great syntheses and the re-emergence of vanished icons.

Names

Couatls don't use personal names the way most mortals do. They use descriptive nouns and epithets that suit them this century or this season. Some of their names might seem paradoxical, or at the least certainly whimsical. Others are deadly earnest.

Couatls may go through several names in their lifespan, so that a couatl presently named Crickets at Midnight was formerly known as Shadow's Onset. Couatls take great joy in recognizing and remembering all the names of their fellow couatls. In fact, this is about all they truly enjoy doing together—two couatls who meet unexpectedly are likely to recite or recount their own or each other's various names over the decades and centuries and then bid each other farewell.

Other couatl names include Fourteenth Inspiration of the Blue Emperor, Ascending Sun, Moon in Three Verses, Strong Wisdom, Transcendent Owl, Twice-broken Blade, Rare Friend, and Unspeakable Name. If you can handle going a bit more sardonic, you wouldn't go wrong looking at the names of the ships in Iain Banks' *Culture* series for inspiration.

Adventure Hooks

By virtue of their knack for helping and meddling, couatls are one of the rare monsters that can be encountered often when the PCs are several levels too low to violently object to the couatl's presence. Once the PCs get to epic tier, couatls can be dealt with on more even terms.

A Dread School for Wizards—A *great synthesis* couatl named Radiant Hope combines the Archmage and the Orc Lord. She has temporarily pacified a surfaced living dungeon full of orc warriors. Unfortunately, the orcs are all busy learning magic instead of practicing mayhem. When the couatl gets bored and leaves, the orcs will stop mastering arcane servitor spells and writing letters to the Archmage and start rampaging with *fireball* spells instead of just swinging poorly made axes. Radiant Hope might be many levels too powerful for the PCs to confront directly and so they're going to have to work around the edges or find a special circumstances solution. Perhaps a few of the orcs can be redeemed? Or is this another kill-them-all-and-let-the-afterlife-sort-them-out story in spite of the couatl's objections.

Heart of Darkness—A *great synthesis* couatl that blends the Diabolist and the Crusader may be a very bad thing to find at the heart of what was one of the Diabolist's hellholes.

Home on Omen—A couatl based above Omen remains true to an icon that apparently belonged to the serpent culture that predated the Wizard King. It wouldn't call its activities "human sacrifice," since humans aren't supposed to be here in the first place. It's more like ritual purification.

Someday This Will All Be Yours—A bright young couatl determines that introducing promising young heroes to the overworld early in their careers will give them a head start when they are finally ready to enter the overworld on their own power. The couatl abducts one PC at a time, whirling them through dangerous confrontations with creatures that will now become that hero's foes. The couatl is tough enough to protect the PC, pretty much. But talking the hero's great future up in front of lethal villains of the overworld complicates the PCs' lives once the couatl has flown away to help other beings.

The Spiral Ramp—Some say there's a Dwarf Lord/Elf Queen couatl at the bottom of a spiral ramp that drops down below Concord from one of the great towers. Some say that neither the Dwarf Lord nor the Elf Queen is happy about it, despite its contribution to keeping Concord concordant.

You Should Have This; No, Really—A couatl devoted to an icon it has in common with a PC arranges for a great gift that suits the PC's positive icon relationship rolls. Eventually, the PC learns that the gift (a magic item or information) comes with strings attached to yet another icon that the PC had no notion they would be forced to be involved with.

DROW

Cruel twisted reflections of high elves, sadistic cousins to the wood elves. Bane of dwarf and gnome, queens of the underworld, a dark nightmare. On the plus side, they make great silk clothing if you don't mind spider-motifs.

Elves of Many Names

There's no one right way to present the drow in *13th Age*. The core book hints at a couple approaches and your players may come up with more. Depending on your players and your campaign, consider mixing any of the following versions of the drow.

Dark Elves/Drow

The roleplaying history of the race makes this an easy default: they're mostly evil elves who live underground and worship a spider goddess whose name others are loath to pronounce. As a race they are rotten to the core, though not all of them are irredeemably evil and there exist pockets of "good" drow. They have in the past made war on both the dwarves and the gnomes, are experts in poison and treachery, and enjoy inflicting torture.

Deep Elves

These elves delved into the living rock, building beautiful cities of quartz and diamond that shone in the darkness like fever dreams. When they returned to the surface they were changed from their cousins, with skin as black as the depths. The deep elves don't speak of why they resumed contact with the surface world, but the spidery horror they uncovered in the inky deeps has warped them.

The Queen's Shadows

As mostly loyal subjects of the Elf Queen, the drows' reputation for evil is much more calculated than obsessive. They handle the aspects of reality the high elves and wood elves would rather not face. The Queen encourages these elves to scare the daylights out of those who venture into the underworld and they relish the task. This phrasing opens the figure of the Elf Queen and her supposedly broken "shards" to cunning games of deceit and plausibly deniable agents. The Dwarf King's relations with the Elf Queen would correspondingly frost over.

Silver Folk

The silver folk are ruled by the eldest among them, for age gives rise to wisdom. As females tend to live longer, this custom has led to a *de facto* matriarchy. The only way for younger silver folk to advance is the death of their elders—treachery and assassination are tools to advance, and to keep younger silver folk from becoming a threat. They revere spiders as exemplars of planning and trap-laying. The silver folk don't universally have silver-white hair, instead some must dye and bleach it to appear older. Honor is secondary to cold practicality and hot paranoia for silver folk.

Wild Elves

These are the most warlike of elves—drow tribes that constantly compete among themselves for territory and only unite in the face of outside threats. This constant struggle has led them to build hidden fortified burrows throughout their forests, allowing them to appear and disappear at will. They move on the surface only at night, and during the day move about via tunnels and hidden rooftop walkways. Wild elves permanently dye their skin midnight blue so as to be invisible at night. The dark-dyed elves have learned to bond with spiders, mostly as a defense against aerial attack (webs in the trees) but also to use as mounts that can travel silently on any surface and for ready access to spider silks and poisons. The drow specialize in hit-and-run tactics and are masters of psychological warfare and stealth.

So there are five different ways to spin your drow. Classic spider-worshiping evil elves, elves haunted by horror from the deeps, agents of the Queen, spies-and-spiders paranoid assassins, and elven tribal special-forces (with teeth filed to points) . . . or maybe your drow are entirely different. Maybe your drow have gray skin, or are albinos, or have deep purple skin. Maybe your drow live in sea caves and worship tentacled monstrosities or live in a realm that is only accessible at night. Maybe your alternate drow have lobster driders and they hunt on the river of the dead. What matters is the core equation that DROW = *elf + darkness + cruelty*.

Drow Spider-Mage

She stalks silently toward you, her sharpened wand pointed at your heart. A spider the size of a cat hisses malevolently at you from her shoulder. Why is she smiling?

3rd level caster [humanoid]
Initiative: +8

Sharpened wand +8 vs. AC—10 damage

R: Shadowfire +8 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—8 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends)
Limited use: Once the spider-mage hits with *shadowfire*, she can't use it again until the target saves against it.

C: Malediction of webs +8 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—The target is stuck (save ends), and takes 5 damage each time it fails the save

Dark orison: Each time the spider-mage misses with an attack, the crit range of attacks by drow and spiders in the battle expands by 1.

Spider speaker: The first time each battle an enemy hits the spider-mage with a melee attack, that attacker takes 8 ongoing poison damage from her familiar.

AC	**19**	
PD	13	**HP 40**
MD	17	

Drow Soldier

It's easy to ignore them so you can concentrate on more dangerous enemies. And then three crossbow quarrels sprout from your shoulder and you shift your priorities.

4th level mook [humanoid]
Initiative: +9

Paired swords +9 vs. AC—6 damage

R: Crossbow +9 vs. AC (one nearby enemy, or a far away enemy at –2 atk)—7 damage

With my dying breath I curse at thee: When the drow soldier drops to 0 hp, one enemy engaged with it takes 2 poison damage before the drow soldier dies.

AC	**20**	
PD	19	**HP 18 (mook)**
MD	14	

Mook: Kill one drow soldier mook for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

Drow Sword Maiden

She moves with an easy grace, seemly bored by the prospect of fighting you. She arches an eyebrow then bows with a mocking flourish of her sword. A moment later you realize you are already bleeding.

5th level troop [humanoid]
Initiative: +13

Cruel cutlass +10 vs. AC—18 damage

C: Dagger dance +10 vs. AC (one nearby enemy, or a far away enemy at –2 atk)—14 damage
Natural even hit: Each other enemy engaged with the sword maiden takes 10 damage.

Nastier Specials

Effortless grace: Once per round when an attack misses the sword maiden, she can move or make a *cruel cutlass* attack as a free action.

Arcane warrior: The sword maiden has a true magic item (probably a weapon) and uses it to her benefit (adjust stats accordingly).

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 75**
MD	15	

Drow Spider-Sorceress

If her smile seems familiar, she's failing to disguise her contempt.

6th level caster [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +11

Sharpened wand +11 vs. AC
—20 damage

R: Darkfire +11 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—20 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends)
Limited use: Once the sorceress hits with *darkfire*, she can't use it again until the target saves.

C: Greater malediction of webs +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—10 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends) and takes 10 damage each time it fails the save

Dark orison: Each time the spider-sorceress misses with an attack, the crit range of attacks by drow and spiders in the battle expands by 1.

Spider speaker: The first time each battle an enemy hits the spider-sorceress with a melee attack, that attacker takes 16 ongoing poison damage from her familiar.

Nastier Specials

Arcane arachnids: The spider-sorceress has a true magic item (probably an implement) and uses it to her benefit (adjust stats accordingly).

AC	**22**	
PD	16	**HP 84**
MD	20	

Drow Darkbolt

A rush of wind, a flicker of movement at the corner of your eye, and a sudden stab of pain.

7th level archer [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +12

Dagger and spidersilk line +12 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)
—22 damage
Miss: 8 damage.

R: Exsanguinating barbed arrows +12 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—20 damage, and 6 ongoing damage
Natural even hit: As a free action, the darkbolt can make a second *barbed arrows* attack against a different enemy with a –2 attack penalty. If it gets another natural even hit, it can make a third (and final) *barbed arrows* attack against a different enemy with a –4 attack penalty as a free action.

Darkbolt vanish!: If unengaged, when the darkbolt attacks and rolls a natural even miss, it can step into a shadow-dimension that turn as a move action. While in the shadows, it can't be seen or targeted with attacks, and it reappears anywhere nearby at the start of its next turn.

Wall-crawler: A darkbolt can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground thanks to its rope-dagger and spiked bracers.

Nastier Specials

Well equipped: The drow has a potion or poison that it can use as a quick action twice this battle (see **Poisons and Potions** below).

AC	**23**	
PD	21	**HP 100**
MD	17	

Drow Cavalry

Scuttling into view with lances and sabers, the drow cavalry moves like a dark and silent wave. Their leader raises his lance in salute, and then they are on you!

Double-strength 9th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +14

Glass-tipped lance +14 vs. AC—75 (90/25) damage, and the target pops free from the cavalry and is weakened (save ends)
Limited use: 1/battle, during a surprise round or the first round of battle.

Spider saber +14 vs. AC—75 (90/25) damage

Expert spider-rider: While mounted, the drow cavalry deals +15 damage with its attacks, hit or miss, against unmounted enemies.

Mounted combatant: Reduce the drow cavalry's attack damage by 50 when it's not riding a spider.

Spider mount: Whenever the drow cavalry rolls a natural 1–10 on an attack roll, its spider mount acts independently, choosing one of the following options:
Bite—The spider makes a *bite* attack.
Jump & Scuttle—The spider and its rider pop free from all enemies and can move somewhere nearby.
Web—The spider makes a *web* attack.

AC	**25**	
PD	23	**HP 270**
MD	18	

Spider Mount

It's larger than a horse and has fangs the size of steak knives. It looks eerily intelligent.

6th level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +15 (or same as rider if it has one)

Bite +11 vs. AC—15 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

C: Web +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—The target is stuck (save ends)

Wall-crawler: A spider mount can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground, and so can its rider.

Uncontrolled: A riderless spider mount will eventually run away. At the start of the spider's turn roll a d4; if you roll less than the escalation die, the mount flees.

AC	**22**	
PD	16	**HP 90**
MD	20	

Nastier Specials

Two good options for nastier specials include different forms of drow cruelty and poisons and potions.

Drow Cruelty

Drow are diverse yet universally cruel. Choose one of the following abilities for all non-mook drow in a battle to have:

Poisoner: When the drow scores a critical hit, it can forego damage to force the target to start making last gasp saves. On the fourth failure, the target falls unconscious (and can't be woken normally) for 2d4 minutes.

Take advantage of weakness: Whenever an enemy nearby a drow rolls a save, it takes its level in damage.

Umbral caul: As long as at least one drow uses a standard action each round to maintain the supernatural darkness, each non-drow creature in the battle becomes dazed (save ends) whenever it rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack roll.

Venomous: The first time each battle a drow hits with a weapon attack, the target also takes 5 ongoing poison damage.

Poisons, Potions, and Substances

Drow are experts at using poisons, potions, and substances with unusual properties. Another way to make the drow nastier is to give them one of these options. Drinking a potion, applying a poison, or using a substance requires only a quick action for a drow with one of these options. Characters who acquire any of these drow items must use a standard action to drink/apply them.

Draft of Eschaton (potion): When drunk it immediately purges the body of all poisons and toxins and ends any ongoing conditions. All the drinker's saves (including last gasp saves and death saves) automatically succeed for the rest of the battle or for five minutes. Immediately after the battle, the drinker must make a DC 30 Constitution check or be completely debilitated and unable to travel far or to fight for a day.

Dragon Apples: Small ceramic spheres that explode. Make a basic ranged attack against a nearby enemy (or level + 5 for drow); on a hit, the target takes 10 ongoing fire damage.

Midnight Tincture: When this glass vial is broken, the nearby area is shrouded in clinging darkness. The darkness lasts 3 rounds. Each creature in the darkness except drow takes a –4 attack penalty. The tincture can be attached to an arrow or bolt.

Potion of Spider Climbing: For one battle or five minutes the drinker can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

Spider Venom: A creature hit by a melee weapon coated in the venom takes 5 ongoing poison damage when the attack roll is a natural 16+.

Web Dust: Made from desiccated spiders, this dust can hold a door shut or stick an object to a wall for five minutes. Champion-tier creatures can make a DC 20 skill check to rip through something held by *web dust* before it fully dissolves, and epic-tier creatures can rip through such objects in a round. Further applications increase the effectiveness: three applications lasts for fifteen minutes, requires 3 successful checks, and takes 3 rounds for epic-tier characters to get through.

Building Battles

Drow are very likely to have arachnids as allies—giant scorpions, hunting spiders, and giant web spiders might be present when drow are about, and perhaps even larger versions of those monsters. Driders have a love-hate relationship or a hate-love relationship with the drow; either way, they're probably fighting on the same side when it's time to torture PCs. When phase spiders ally with the drow, give them the dire beast *poison* ability (*13th Age* core book, page 206). For more spider-themed drow allies, try the following mooks.

Weaver Swarm

A loom-full can weave a gown in under an hour, and a pouch of them thrown at you can mess up your whole day.

3rd level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +9

A thousand needle wounds +8 vs. AC—5 damage

Natural 16+: The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

Natural 18+: As above, and the target is also stuck until the end of its next turn.

Clinging: Enemies take a –5 penalty to disengage checks against the swarm.

Wall-crawler: The swarm can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 10 (mook)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one weaver swarm mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

Lokkris

They look like somebody cross-bred bird-eating spiders with parasitic dire wasps!

6th level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +16

Stingers on each leg +11 vs. AC—8 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage

Lays eggs in your eyes!: Each time the lokkris hits with the attack, the crit range for all lokkris against that target expands by 1 until the end of the battle.

Flight: Lokkris are quick darting fliers that move with an angry buzzing sound.

Wall-crawler: A lokkris can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

AC	**22**	
PD	21	**HP 23 (mook)**
MD	14	

Mook: Kill one lokkris mook for every 23 damage you deal to the mob.

Drow and the Icons

Crusader: The dark gods that some drow serve have interests in common with the Crusader . . .

Diabolist: . . . which can become complicated because those same gods also have links with the Diabolist's demon consorts.

Dwarf King: He hates all drow, a holdover from ancient wars. The dwarves have a saying, *"Dwarves have honor in their hearts. Humans have bravery in theirs. Drow have only poison."*

Elf Queen: As subjects of the Elf Queen, drow have a strong link to her and she to them.

The Three: Drow are more welcome in Drakkenhall than most of the cities of the Empire, but the Elf Queen and the Blue have deep rivalries and suspicions, so who can say who is fooling who?

Names

Some drow have names such as Tyyler Du'Urden, Tro'Eax of House Mitzleplixus, Esozzt Nixxrymn, Lirnelk Oblier, Mikkariel Phanare. Others have names that are dark reflections of high elf names: Kiriel Blackleaf, Braene Elfbane, Kren'kara Darkslayer.

Drow or Drow?

Drow comes from the Orcadian-Scottish "trowe" (rhymes with "cow" not with "toe")—a dark malevolent fairie creature similar in behavior to a kobold. Trowe in turn comes from the Nordic *Dökkálfr* meaning "dark elf," which also gave rise to the word "troll." If you dig deep enough you'll find everything's connected.

Things Drow Carry

Eight sided platinum pieces engraved with web designs. Beautiful spider-silk clothes. Laminated black silk armor (strong as plate, half the weight). Wickedly sharp daggers. Torture instruments made of ebonite and vulcanite. Black spider-silk rope. Intricate red-lacquered puzzle box that plays a musical tune as each piece is unlocked. Black carbonado beads. Pictures of drow family. Picture of *your* family, a map, and certain instructions. Hematite carving of a spider-woman. Set of mithril lockpicks. Jet jewelry. Lamp black for weapons. Weaver swarm in a pouch (roll for initiative!). Black diamonds.

Adventure Hooks

A Very Splendid Affair—A drow ambassador from the Court of Stars admires one of the adventurers, so her drow rivals wish to assassinate the party as part of the endlessly vicious maneuverings of the drow at court.

Demons of the Queenweb Pit—The spider goddess has plans for you and has dispatched drow to seize you and bring you into the underworld for sacrifice! Her cultists believe this will strengthen their influence with the Elf Queen.

Surface Raid—Suddenly and without warning the drow attack. All is not as it seems—the drow are using the attack as cover to sneak a magically disguised spy into the midst of those they are attacking.

The Drakkenhall Spider—A drow called Re'Naatharian approaches the adventurers asking them to retrieve a stolen idol, a black figurine that she says is hers. The figurine is only covered in black lacquer, underneath it's solid mithril. As soon as the characters meet with Re'Naatharian and accept or refuse her offer they will be dodging drow assassins working for rival factions. What is *inside* the figurine? Double-crosses, treachery, and tangled webs.

The Spider Wood Run—The characters are hired as a crew for the first non-elf boat competing in the annual Opals-to-Iron-Sea regatta. The drow are offended by their presence. The adventurers only discover that the original crew were murdered after the race starts.

DYBBUK

Possessing ghosts, demonic intruders, or alien visitors. Who can say for sure?

Dybbuk Legends

The stories surrounding dybbuks are often contradictory, probably muddied by the dybbuk themselves. For your game decide which one or more of the following ideas are true:

- Dybbuks are demons who seek physical bodies to do evil deeds. They imitate the recently departed to confuse demon-hunters who hear about them. [DEMON]
- Dybbuks are the souls of the dead who wish to continue living in warm bodies. [UNDEAD]
- Dybbuks are strange visitors from another realm who use the memories of the dead as their guides and the bodies of the living as their vessels. [ABERRATION]
- Dybbuks are possibility-echoes of those who never were, people who could have existed if not for the birth of another. [ABERRATION]
- Dybbuks are the souls of those who were rewritten out of existence by magic. [UNDEAD]

The monster entries for the dybbuk show their type as "demon," but that dybbuk origin might not apply in your game. Feel free to change their type to suit your story.

Dybbuk Possession

Dybbuks are blown about by spectral winds no one else can see and must cling to people and objects. Spellcasters and others who have more spirit vision than most occasionally see dybbuks clinging to the sides of buildings like fluttering flags or desperately clinging to the shoulders of animals and people like shadowy capes. Characters who can see the other-world will mistake the translucent shade of a dybbuk for a trick of the light unless they make a DC 30 check.

Once a dybbuk finds a host it wishes to possess, it anchors itself to the victim's body. Thereafter it lives inside its host's physical shadow and is no longer buffeted by other-world storms. Over time the dybbuk warps the mind and body of its host, and eventually inhabits it entirely.

Corpse Dybbuk

The dybbuk has found a still-warm corpse and climbed inside. The meat puppet is almost indistinguishable from as it was in life, and it may be that nobody knows that it's not the original person recovered from their illness or ordeal.

Double-strength 6th level troop [DEMON]
Initiative: +12

Supernatural strength +11 vs. AC—35 damage
Natural 16+: The target is vulnerable to the dybbuk's attacks until the end of the battle.
Natural 18+: The dybbuk gains a *fear* aura against the target (save ends) as the dybbuk warps its corpse-flesh into a horrifying form. While engaged with the dybbuk, if the scared target has 30 hp or fewer, it's dazed (–4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.
Miss: 3d6 damage.

Unholy aversion: When an enemy makes a spell attack or magic weapon attack against the corpse dybbuk that deals holy damage and rolls a natural 18+, the dybbuk leaves its host body. The body drops in place and the corpse dybbuk becomes an undamaged ethereal dybbuk (see that entry). If the escalation die is 3+, reset the escalation die to 2.

Warp another's flesh: Once per battle as a free action, the corpse dybbuk can grant a nearby ally a +2 bonus to attack and damage until the end of the battle. The warped ally takes damage equal to its level each time it uses a standard action to attack. If this ability is expended, the dybbuk regains it when the escalation die reaches 4+.

AC 22
PD 16 **HP 180**
MD 20

I Cast Thee Out!

Using holy damage on a dybbuk possessing a corpse (a corpse dybbuk) or a living victim (a parasitic dybbuk) can force the dybbuk to leave that body, but it produces a new, slightly tougher monster. Thankfully, the ethereal dybbuk fades away after a short time, because it can't maintain a physical presence in the world for long without a host. Exposing a dybbuk to holy water or dragging it onto holy ground might have a similar effect, or not—that is the GM's call.

Parasitic Dybbuk

The dybbuk has warped a stolen body to suit its own purposes. Somewhere inside there is a trapped innocent screaming to be set free.

Double-strength 6th level spoiler [DEMON]
Initiative: +13

Loathsome vomity smear +10 vs. PD—40 poison damage
Miss: 3d10 poison damage.

C: Unearthly glare +10 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—30 psychic damage
Natural even hit or miss: One special dybbuk ability triggers as a free action (see below).

Shapechange: As a standard action, the dybbuk can change its host's form to that of another humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 25 skill check. When the dybbuk is driven out of the host body, the body reverts to its original form.

Unholy aversion: When an enemy makes a spell attack or magic weapon attack against the parasitic dybbuk that deals holy damage and rolls a natural 18+, the dybbuk leaves the host body. The body drops in place (unconscious) and the parasitic dybbuk becomes an undamaged ethereal dybbuk (see that entry). If the escalation die is 3+, reset the escalation die to 2.

Wall-crawler: A dybbuk can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

Special Dybbuk Abilities: Choose ONE
C: Visage of innocence +11 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—The target can't attack the dybbuk until the end of its next turn.

C: Horrific visage +11 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—The target is weakened (save ends).

C: Puppet strings +11 vs. MD—The target is confused (save ends).

Scratching nails: When the target is engaged with the dybbuk at the start of its turn, it takes 20 damage.

Warped flesh: The dybbuk heals 30 hp.

Nastier Specials
Experienced possessor: When the dybbuk rolls a natural odd hit or miss with *unearthly glare*, one special dybbuk ability triggers.

Flight: The dybbuk can hover 6 feet off the ground and make boneless flea-like leaps.

AC 22
PD 16 **HP 180**
MD 20

Ethereal Dybbuk

The ghostly form is fading away rapidly, but the dybbuk wants to make its presence felt before it goes. When faced with the truth of it, most choose to run and hide rather than stand and fight.

Double-strength 7th level wrecker [DEMON]
Initiative: +16

R: Soul-suck +12 vs. MD (3 attacks, against nearby or far away enemies)—38 negative energy damage
Limited use: If the dybbuk hits the same target with its first two *soul-suck* attacks, it must make the third attack against a different target if it can (or loses the attack).

Fading: When the escalation die is 2+, the dybbuk's *soul-suck* attack only deals 19 damage, and when it's 4+, *soul-suck* only deals 10 damage. When the escalation die reaches 6, the dybbuk fades away at the end of the round. A dybbuk that fades away undefeated is not gone forever and may return in a later adventure.

Fear: The dybbuk knows things about the other side and enjoys telling such "secrets" to you! While engaged with this creature, enemies that have 36 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

Flight: The dybbuk hovers eerily, roughly 6 feet off the ground.

Otherworldly: When a melee attack that doesn't deal holy damage targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**26**	
PD	24	**HP 206 (see *fading*)**
MD	20	

Building Battles

Dybbuks will work with almost any type of creature, because they could be in possession of almost any type of creature that has above-animal intelligence. They will command or work with anyone to achieve their hideous goals. Usually, dybbuks take humanoid form, which limits their choice of allies somewhat, but they have been known to inhabit intelligent non-humanoid monsters upon occasion.

Unless they're being constrained by a far mightier villain, dybbuks prefer to have nothing to do with other dybbuks, possibly because they'd rather not be reminded of their temporary hold on substantiation.

Dybbuks and the Icons

Diabolist: *"The Diabolist summons them up out of the thirteen hells. It's her new plan to bring chaos and destruction. She's got thousands of the things just waiting, possessing key figures. When the moment comes, the walls and wards will fall all at once and she'll be laughing at us as we burn. That's why the Priestess and the Crusader and the Great Gold Wyrm work together—they are trying to root out all the dybbuks before the Diabolist can strike."* —Erika of Tarakesh, wizard of the Magenta Veil

Lich King: *"It makes sense that the Crusader hates dybbuks—they are hard to enslave. The Lich King is allied with them. I hear ol' bony face is using a secret army of corpse dybbuks to destabilize the rituals that keep the undead in check."* —Stabbitha LeGrott, a halfling woman wanted in six cities for high crimes

Prince of Shadows: *"I heard a rumor that the Prince of Shadows IS a dybbuk. He's never caught because he jumps from host body to host body! You'll never know when he's watching from behind somebody's eyes."* —Hrulk, a half-ork dancer/bodyguard from Shadow Port

The Three: *"They're a sort of shapechanging monster-thing. You see them sometimes in Drakkenhall. The Three use them as secret police to keep an eye on the criminal element. Criminal element. Ha! The whole city is monsters and murderers."* —Orien O'Brien, captain of the Swift-Knuckle guard

Good Dybbuks?

Maybe a dybbuk is actually good (or at least willing to strike a deal). In such a case, a dybbuk could time-share a body with a host in exchange for the dybbuk providing arcane knowledge or inhabiting the body to stand watch at night. If you decide that dybbuks are ghosts and not demons then perhaps the host and dybbuk are lovers separated by death and they share the body—one at night and one during the day. Perhaps the dybbuk is an evil demon and is just forcing the host to say that they are okay with the arrangement.

Things Dybbuks Carry

Dybbuks are immaterial beings that neither need money nor covet magical items. In material form they carry whatever would be appropriate for the body they have taken, but their nature precludes them from attuning to true magic items.

Adventure Hooks

Return of the King's Adviser—A corpse dybbuk approaches the adventurers and asks for their help. She was adviser to the Wizard King before he fell into madness. She was betrayed, her body disintegrated, and her soul trapped in a box and buried. Foolish treasure seekers on the Necropolis uncovered her box and freed her. She took one of their bodies after they fell afoul of zombies and has made her way since then trying to avoid attention. Her name is Zamorez the Wise and she seeks to finish some ancient business. Do the heroes oppose her and bring her before the minions of the Lich King, or do they aid her in striking back against her betrayer? Her quest is seemingly simple: go to the isle of undead and destroy certain obelisks of power there.

Some Like It Not—A dybbuk has kidnapped a popular gladiatorial official, possessing him and shapechanging the body to sneak out of Axis among a troop of dancers bound for New Port. The dybbuk had help; at least one of the dancers is its accomplice. The dybbuk demands the release of certain high-profile prisoners allied to the Diabolist or it will start making public certain papers that the official had in his possession. The dancers have been recently assembled to perform for the Blue in Drakkenhall, and their draconic guards don't care about the missing official—they just want to get their charges to the Three. Can the adventurers avoid a diplomatic incident with the Three, set the official free (and avoid killing him in the process), not harm any of the innocent dancers, find the guilty accomplice, capture the dybbuk, and get the missing papers?

The dance troupe includes:

- *Jaymes Syd*—A well-connected man, now possessed, shapechanged, and kidnapped. The dybbuk who has his body is masquerading as one of the dancers, but which one?
- *Jonai Shims*—The oldest of the dancers, she hails from a fishing village near the Fangs.
- *Hatti Jacks*—A former stevedore from Santa Cora who recently found her calling as a dancer.
- *Barbera Balmoral*—A bubbly and optimistic dancer who instinctively distrusts the Emperor.
- *Pesillifillil Whiteleaf*—A wood-elf dancer from the Wild Wood, and the only male among the troupe.
- *Petra Butterworth*—A halfing tavern-dancer from Twisp who keeps to herself.
- *Connie Kenneth*—Connie and her sister used to have a circus act in Horizon, or did they?
- *Billie Kenneth*—The older of the two Kenneth sisters, or is she?
- *Charli Hawbush*—A dwarf dancer who claims to have once danced for the Dwarf King.
- *Jimed Ales*—A blue sorcerer, guardian to the dancers, and servant of the Three.
- *Brezzlore*—Head of the dragonic guards.

The Bride—A woman has returned to her fiancé a year after being reported drowned at sea. At her insistence the cancelled wedding is hastily rearranged. On the night before the wedding strangers arrive, claiming that the bride is a dybbuk possessing their friend Mozz. Their friend is an important hero, due to give vital information to the Emperor directly and must travel with them to Axis to seek a cure so that he can have an audience with the ruler of the Empire. Both sides plead with the adventurers to intercede on their behalf, but is anything really what it seems to be?

The wedding party includes:

- *Susanifer Shaw*—The bride, returned from the sea, or has she?
- *Corwyn Lester*—The groom, overjoyed to see his love once more.
- *Goodwife Suzzana Shaw*—The mother of the bride.
- *Duke Andro Lester*—The father of the groom.

The friends of Mozz the Hero include:

- *Richian the Red*—A human wizard who specializes in fire magic and has a flying badger familiar.
- *Davoul*—A half-elf swordsman and scholar who dabbles in illusion magic and cheats at cards.
- *Fetch*—A huge forgeborn barbarian from the Red Wastes who feels great loyalty to Mozz.

The Holy Box—The adventurers are hired by a dying priest to take a box with 13 spirits in it (mostly dybbuks) to a monastery on a faraway mountain. The box looks plain, a simple rosewood cube about a foot on each side. The box is magical, however, and it can be used to trap defeated spirits, but when it's opened all the (now very angry) spirits will escape. During the journey possessed animals attack the party, attempting to free the spirits in the box.

The List—Years ago twelve adventurers burnt down a cottage to "teach the locals a lesson." Now they are dying one by one, and the survivors hire the adventurers for protection. A corpse dybbuk is killing them off, jumping into each victim and leaving its former body to be found murdered. There are now seven of the twelve left: *Allisa Lackgayte the Bard, Banbara Leonis of Concord, Jorunn Greengable, Kal Credhe, Pascalious the Blue Wizard, Jensine Mathrasdottir,* and *Egron Stonebeard*.

They have gathered together inside Last Dragon Hall, a huge mansion standing on a lonely buff near Cape Thunder. The only other people there are *Alan Cheseman* (the hunchbacked proprietor), *Frank Timperly* (the elderly caretaker and handyman), and his pale daughter *Iviana*. To complicate matters, Frank Timperly is a smuggler on the side and has built many secret passages in the mansion over the years. As a storm rolls in and cuts off the causeway to the mainland, the hidden dybbuk strikes. Can the adventurers defeat it, or will it leave wearing one of their bodies?

PCs and Possession: Optional Rules

Use these rules if you want to include dybbuks as a slowly encroaching horror that subverts the mind and body of the adventurers. It's not for everyone because it turns the campaign into a horror story with rather loathsome consequences of increasing power.

You don't need to bother with these rules for NPC dybbuks; use whatever is dramatically appropriate. Adventurers know when a dybbuk is inside them. Common folk generally don't know, but adventurers are mentally tougher than most.

The dybbuk starts with a possession score of 1. Each day (after each full heal-up) the GM secretly makes a d20 possession roll. If the result is lower than or equal to the dybbuk's possession score, the possession score increases by 1. Once the possession score reaches 20, the host immediately becomes a parasitic dybbuk NPC under the GM's control and remains so until they are killed or the dybbuk is driven out of them.

An adventurer hosting a dybbuk may call upon the power of the dybbuk and use one of the abilities listed below. Doing so makes it easier for the dybbuk to fully possess its host. Each time in a day (between full heal-ups) the host calls upon the dybbuk's power, a cumulative –1 penalty is applied to the possession roll. Regardless of the possession score, a result of 1 or less on the possession roll allows the dybbuk to take full control of the host when they next sleep, allowing the dybbuk several hours of freedom to do as it wishes.

Flea-flight: The dybbuk's host can make a huge flea-like leap to some place nearby or far away as a move action that doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Horrific visage: As a quick action once per round, the dybbuk allows itself to be seen by the host's enemies while twisting the host's face into a supernaturally monstrous expression. The host chooses 1d3 nearby enemies; each takes a –2 penalty to its attacks (save ends).

Very slow shape shift: The dybbuk twists its host's flesh. It's not a full transformation but is enough to give the host a +5 bonus to disguise skill checks. Minor details can be changed (skin texture and color, hair color, hair length by a few inches, facial features can be shifted, body proportions can stretch or shrink by a couple of inches) but repeated uses of this power stacked on each other can radically reshape the host's appearance permanently. Using this power is momentarily painful, and for the minute or so that the dybbuk is stretching and twisting the body into the new shape the host can't take any actions. Changing back requires using the power again and takes the same amount of time.

Vicious hissing defender: As a quick action, the host temporarily gains sharpened nails and teeth. Until the end of the battle, each enemy engaged with the host at the start of the host's turn takes damage equal to the host's melee miss damage.

Visage of innocence: As a quick action once per round, the dybbuk twists the perceptions of others. The host chooses one nearby enemy; that creature can't attack the host until the end of its next turn.

Wall-crawler: The dybbuk slowly and painfully twists the host's limbs to allow it to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as the host moves on the ground—though their seemingly broken-backed twisted-limb all-fours crab-walk is disturbing to watch. The change takes a minute to accomplish each way and lasts for about 10 minutes.

Warp spasm: As a quick action once per round, the dybbuk causes the host's body to spasm, granting them amazing temporary strength. That turn, the host either gains a +5 bonus to their next Strength check, or a +5 damage bonus to their next melee attack that hits.

ELDER BEAST

The word "impossible" may not mean what you think it means. It might mean doom.

Dimension-hopping Progenitors?

Beyond the boundaries of the world dwell horrors of such unimaginable perversion as to sunder the minds of those that gaze upon them. Alien and inconceivable, these beings dwell in outer dimensions where form and permanence are meaningless as time.

Some claim that elder beasts crossed the borders between the dimensions in a time long before the first age of the world. In the primal chaos of creation, the cosmos and all its myriad dimensions aligned, and by the nascent light of ancient stars, formless unnamable things spilled over into the mundane world. The hideous beings trod the primeval landscapes on pseudopods and flippers and feet, each creature spontaneously transforming to adapt to each new environment it encountered.

In their native forms, elder beasts are a massive composite of shape-shifting parts, some appendages native to the world, some entirely alien. Unlike the amoeboid umluppuks that serve the nameless entities of the mad dimension from which the creatures hail, a hagunemnon can change its shape to assume the form of a specific creature. They do this to explore a world and to prey upon beings that they wish to consume, whose forms the horrific monsters hunger to absorb. While umluppuks are simply mad, a hagunemnon's actions contribute toward a purpose—even if that purpose is inscrutable to all but the perversely warped or chronically insane.

Mad sages, tainted by their research into eldritch realms and forbidden rituals, claim that the world was barren of sentient creatures before elder beasts and their ilk catalyzed organic life and caused it to adapt. They refute the notion that the humanoid races are the creations of divine inspiration, but rather the random accidental mutations of a race of mad, apathetic beings of unspeakable power. Several secret cults have formed around this belief, seeking the forbidden texts containing the means to summon elder beasts back into the world when the dimensions align once again. The cults believe intelligent life to be an accident that has brought misery to the ones it should have benefited. They hold that mortal suffering would be eliminated if the elder creatures returned and caused the world to mutate or evolve into new, more "perfect" forms that embraced the madness of impermanence.

Umluppuk

Shapeless servants of unspeakable horrors, umluppuks lurk in remote, forgotten places, babbling choruses of madness.

Umluppuks dwell in the subterranean gloom of the underworld, in abyssal trenches at the bottom of the sea, and beneath mountainous glaciers of ice at the far ends of the world. Sealed in lightless pits, forgotten vaults, and ancient tombs where elder horrors dream away the ages in deathless sleep, umluppuks babble madly in the darkness, awaiting the age when their foul ilk return to the surface world and reshape the works, bodies, and minds of the creatures that inhabit it.

A dark quivering mass of jabbering mouths and mismatched eyes, the umluppuk mutters incessantly in a multitude of alien tongues. It absorbs common languages from the thoughts of nearby creatures and speaks nonsensical phrases, rhymes, and abstract thoughts inciting madness in the minds of those that hear it. The few sane creatures that are aware of the umluppuks' existence regret their possession of this knowledge; to contemplate the umluppuk and its native realm is to grapple with alien concepts antithetical to the rational mind, and it inevitably brings a touch of madness.

Umluppuks were created to act as servants to beings more ancient, more powerful, and more mysterious than the gods. Except for those summoned by magical rituals, umluppuks that exist in the world have lived there since primeval eras long before the coming of humans or elves. They do not need to eat, but given the opportunity they will consume any creature they can, absorbing its intellect and adding its eyes and mouth to the umluppuk's gelatinous body. An umluppuk propels itself by pseudopods that roil with dozens of eyes and insane, gibbering mouths.

Huge 7th level spoiler [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +15

Pods of mouths and eyes +12 vs. AC (4 attacks)—20 damage
Natural even hit: The target is stuck (easy save ends, 6+).
Miss: 10 damage.

C: Chorus of madness +12 vs. MD (up to 3 random nearby creatures)—10 ongoing psychic damage, and the target is confused (save ends both)
Quick use: This ability only requires a quick action (once per round) instead of a standard action when the umluppuk starts its turn unengaged (or without an enemy consumed if you are using the nastier special!).

Resist psychic 18+: When a psychic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

"Fight your wars if you must, but ask no help of druids, for we want no part; our great enemy lurks behind reality's veil, and if you glimpsed the truth of it the remnants of your broken mind would make so much less than a beast of you."
—Shamul of the Oaken Path

Nastier Specials
Consume: Once per round during its turn, the umluppuk can make a *consume* attack against a stuck enemy as a quick action. The umluppuk can only have one target consumed at a time.
Consume +12 vs. PD (one stuck enemy)—50 damage, and the target takes 10 ongoing acid damage and is absorbed into the umluppuk (hard save ends both, 16+); while inside the umluppuk, the target is vulnerable to the umluppuk's *pods of mouths and eyes* attacks (*attacks vs. it have crit range expanded by 2*), and it's stuck

AC 23
PD 21 **HP 310**
MD 20

Hagunemnon

The hagunemnon shifts from shape to random shape. It flaps and crawls and slides and oozes—on spider's legs and cow's tongues and snail's bellies and vulture's wings.

Large 13th level wrecker [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +16

Spontaneous metamorphosing limbs +18 vs. AC—110 damage, and the hagunemnon can make a *spontaneous metamorphosing limbs* attack against a different target as a free action
Natural 19+: The target starts making last gasp saves. On the fourth failure, it becomes a shapeless ooze.
Diminishing limbs: With each subsequent hit after the first, *spontaneous metamorphosing limbs* deals 20 less damage. The hagunemnon also doesn't gain any extra attacks when it makes a basic attack.

Dimension hop: As a move action when the escalation die is odd, the hagunemnon can teleport nearby or far away to a location it can see.

Resist psychic 18+: When a psychic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Shapechange: As a standard action, the hagunemnon can change its form to that of any large or medium creature, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 25 skill check.

Nastier Specials
Madness aura: When a creature is engaged with the hagunemnon at the start of its turn, it takes 4d10 psychic damage. If it takes 31 or more damage this way during a single turn, it's also confused until the start of its next turn.

AC 29
PD 23 **HP 864**
MD 27

Warped Beast

It starts when an extraneous digit buds upon the flesh, but soon an extra eye, tail, hand, or claw blooms. It ends in madness, the appendages of the body monstrously transformed into wriggling many-mouthed tentacles.

The monstrous dimensions that exist beyond reality lie far removed from the world, only intersecting in ages when the stars align, when the potent wizard spells bridge the gap, or when artifacts of the primeval world are exhumed from strange underworld vaults and put to use. The weird energies of these alien dimensions warp the land and the creatures that come in contact with them. Extra noses, eyes, and mouths flare open upon animals' hides; quivering cilia and pseudopods, wormlike appendages and barbed tentacles, coarse quills and pus-bleeding orifices—all of these and even more horrific features spontaneously form, driving ordinary creatures to frenzied, murderous madness.

The stat block for the warped beast can be used for any normal-sized creature tainted by elder beasts or the energy of their terrible dimension. The changes may be immediately apparent—a bear, boar, or other natural creature might bristle with eyes and tentacles and ooze—or the changes may be subtle, such as if a human, elf, or dwarf tainted by the alien dimension hid its extra eye, tentacle arm, second head, etc. Each warped beast has a different madness feature determined each turn.

5th level wrecker [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +9

Tentacle maw +10 vs. AC—16 damage
Natural 18+: The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.
Miss: The warped beast can make a *psychic blast* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Psychic blast +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—8 psychic damage
Natural 18+: The target is confused until the end of its next turn.

One madness feature: At the start of each of the warped beast's turns, roll a d6. The warped beast gains the corresponding ability until the start of its next turn.

1. *Amorphous oozing form:* The beast has *resist damage 11+* to all damage.
2. *Dimensional slide:* Once during its turn, the warped beast can teleport anywhere nearby it can see as a move action. Each enemy engaged with it when it teleports is confused until the end of its next turn.
3. *Fear aura:* While engaged with the warped beast, enemies that have 24 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.
4. *Gibbering mouths:* When an enemy ends its turn engaged with the warped beast, it's confused until the end of its next turn.
5. *Many spontaneous limbs:* When the warped beast makes a *tentacle maw* attack during its turn, roll a d4. That many additional limbs or tentacles spontaneously erupt from the creature and make an additional basic attack that turn (special abilities/effects don't trigger on those extra attacks). Each of those attacks only deals half damage.
6. *Warping touch:* When the warped beast hits a creature with a *tentacle maw* attack, the target also takes 5 ongoing psychic damage and a –2 penalty to saves (save ends both).

Nastier Specials
Warped mutant: Roll two madness features instead of one each round (reroll similar results).

AC 20
PD 17
MD 15
HP 75

Building Battles

Elder beasts invade most often in places where magic has ripped open reality to allow them to pass into the world. When PCs find an abandoned mage tower, they should ask themselves why it has been abandoned before the looting starts.

The creatures most likely found alongside elder beasts are other aberrations. They share what the rest of existence thinks of insanity.

It's possible that elder beasts can also be found with demons, but these two great evils have opposed visions for the world. The elder beasts aim to remake the world along ancient blueprints that should never be. Most demons want to outright destroy the world and wouldn't be any happier in a world recreated by the elder beasts.

Warped beasts or umluppuks might show up anywhere a group of crazed cultists delving into long-lost rituals has succeeded—or lost all control—depending on how you look at it.

"Worse things than demons lurk in the outer dark. The nameless ones have plotted their return since the beginning of time, when their mad dynasty declined and they were driven back beyond the edge of reality. Oppose the Crusader, diminish our forces, and who will protect your existence when the elder things return?"

—Tamarin Steele, herald of Red Gauntlet Company

Elder Beasts and the Icons

To most of the icons, elder beasts are only a legend, a scrap of forbidden knowledge in reference to unmentionable horrors from unfathomable dimensions. In the powerful circles of the arcane, these protean horrors hold the keys to greater knowledge and power . . . ever at the risk of madness.

Archmage: Elder beasts threaten the stability of reality, warp living creatures into shapeless monstrosities, and work to loosen the boundaries of time and space to unleash elder horrors upon the world. The current Archmage is probably aware of these dangers and opposed to contact with elder beasts. This lesson may have been passed down by earlier Archmagi who dabbled with disastrous consequences.

Diabolist: Demon summoners know little of elder beasts, except that the alien entities tear reality asunder wherever they go. It's virtually impossible for the Diabolist (or any other creature) to form an alliance with a hagunemnon, but the beings' existence amuses the mad Diabolist, even if their aims are opposed. The Diabolist's minions might open gates to the dread dimensions where the hagunemnons boil. Or they might just think it's a great place to send heroes.

Lich King: In a past age when the Lich was known as the Wizard King, elder beasts and other aberrant monstrosities inhabited the Wizard King's towers and dungeons. They were objects of study, uncaring guardians of priceless treasures, and monstrous tools to be used against the Wizard King's enemies. Hagunemnons and their ilk hold no terror for the Lich King or the mindless undead that form his army, and the powerful deathless wizard still occasionally summons elder beasts from alien dimensions to fight his wars. Or perhaps that's just Imperial propaganda . . .

Adventure Hooks

Elder beasts subtly warp the minds of all they encounter. Their existence in the world threatens to unravel reality itself.

Descent into Madness—During an expedition into the underworld, an earthquake collapses the caverns leading back to the surface. The quake opens a new path through eldritch cyclopean corridors old as time. The dark passages lead through vaults of whispering horrors, where inchoate umluppuks babble and murmur. As NPC members of the expedition start to go mad, the characters discover the terrible truth at the heart of the dark ancient ruin and learn the horrific price they must pay should they ever wish to see daylight again.

The Shrieking Forest—An aquamarine meteorite casts a green trail across the sky before impacting the world at the heart of a verdant forest. Over the next several days, the forest transforms. The trees turn gelatinous, change their colors, and prey on the forest creatures. They also uproot, shriek, howl, and speak in tongues. The forest beasts that are not eaten by the trees manifest extra limbs, eyes, mouths, and tentacles. Then they leave the forest to hunt. And now the people in the surrounding villages have begun to change as well. . . .

"The victims' plague boils turn to eyes, the sores into fang-toothed mouths. We pray to the gods for guidance, but they brood and lock the gates of their heavens, for even the gods fear these monsters."

—Attian the Doubter

Ettercap

If you must choose between falling into a giant spider's web or the clutches of the ettercaps, choose the spider unless you enjoy being tortured until you have no secrets.

ettercap keeper

The Secret Keepers

Ettercaps are humanoids who exhibit spider-like tendencies. Having long limbs and small torsos, they walk upright but during battle will drop down into spider crawls. They have expressive faces but with jaws that open like mandibles. Ettercaps all worship the same evil god. They dare not speak her name, but she is most commonly known as She Who Spins in Darkness. The ettercaps drape her temples in spider motif, and instead of prayers and offerings they bring her that which she truly desires: secrets. Whispering a secret to the altar is the most holy act an ettercap can perform. Whispering is their prayer language. Their fanes are filled with silence like the ocean is filled with water.

The majority of ettercap society is scattered through the deep forests of the world and the underworld in random hunting clans, the better to disguise the true location of the all-important temples. The ettercap hunters live unremarkable lives of predation and banditry made more meaningful by their secret devotion to the secret work. They frequently serve drow or other spider-oriented underworld denizens, but it's safe to say their hearts aren't into it.

You can fill in the details of ettercap hunter life yourself—most of this monster entry focuses on the less familiar elite of ettercap society, those who are fortunate, skilled, or blessed enough to rise within the temples.

The Priests of She Who Spins In Darkness

When a temple ettercap reaches maturity, it becomes an acolyte in service of the fane, doing most of the undesirable work around the temple. They clean the altar and sweep the corners. They monitor the other members of the temple and learn how to eavesdrop on everyone. Other than a dagger to defend themselves, they are given little else to clothe or feed themselves. The acolytes remain (or are kept) inside the fane at all

times. Those who prove their devotion eventually take on another role within the priesthood. Any who are found lacking are bound and cast into the deep pit under the altar, never to be seen again.

Acolytes who show a penchant for spell casting become supplicants. Supplicants are able to intuit vague aspects of their goddess' will by performing small rituals, sacrifices, and assassinations. Despite their value to the community, supplicants are often tasked with secret missions only She reveals in Her conversations with the temple's keeper (or keepers, in the case of a large temple). The supplicants are occasionally tasked with bringing Her word to non-ettercaps. The ettercaps think of this as missionary work but anyone else would see it as trading carefully nurtured secrets for power.

The other life path for the acolyte is to become a warrior. Warriors have more in common with the ettercap hunters beyond the fane, and may in fact be trained and nurtured from promising hunters. They are trained to defend the fane and are indoctrinated with the belief that it's their duty to give up their lives for it. If they are lucky, they will do so while She watches. In the rare instance that two fanes go to war, the advantage goes to the temple whose warriors keep their actions secret the longest—public and undeniable actions against rival temples are perceived as obvious failures . . . which is why it's not impossible to find one ettercap temple secretly recruiting agents to cause trouble for another.

The highest rank in an ettercap temple is "keeper." Keepers are the spiritual and political leaders of the temple, and lead both supplicants and warriors in the fane. Keepers are tasked with speaking to She Who Spins In Darkness directly. The older the ettercap, the more often it is able to speak with Her, and the oldest among them speak to Her so often they rarely interact with their congregation. They interpret Her whispers and ensure those in the fane carry out Her will.

Ettercap Hunter

The ettercap hunter's primitivism may be artifice, a cultural ploy to distract from the secret world of the fanes.

2nd level blocker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +6

Poison bite +7 vs. AC—6 damage, and 4 ongoing poison damage
Miss: If the target is dazed, hampered, or stuck, it takes 4 extra damage.

C: Web spray +8 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies in a group)—3 damage
Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).
Natural odd hit: The target is stuck (save ends).
Limited use: 1/battle.

Goopy webs: When an enemy of level 4 or lower rolls a natural 1–5 with a melee attack against an ettercap hunter, that enemy is dazed (save ends).

AC	**18**	
PD	14	**HP 32**
MD	14	

Ettercap Acolyte

The creatures stop whispering simultaneously. The ones bowing and scraping on the floor reach for daggers attached to their bodies by tendrils of webbing. They open their mouths wide for a scream that does not come.

1st level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +2

Sacrificial dagger +6 vs. AC—3 damage

Fanatical devotion: As a standard action, an ettercap acolyte can deal 2d6 poison damage to one dazed, hampered, or stuck enemy engaged with it. The ettercap acolyte also takes 7 damage from this kamikaze action, killing it.

Goopy webs: When an enemy of level 3 or lower rolls a natural 1–5 with a melee attack against an ettercap acolyte, that enemy is dazed (save ends).

AC	**16**	
PD	13	**HP 7 (mook)**
MD	15	

Mook: Kill one ettercap acolyte mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob.

Ettercap Supplicant

The creatures kneeling at the altar leap to their feet with unnerving speed. Energy crackles around them as they surround one older-looking member of their horrid kind. The ettercaps draw strange patterns in the air, which mirror green glowing lines suddenly being traced in the air around you.

3rd level caster [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +6

Sacrificial dagger +7 vs. AC—8 damage, and the ettercap supplicant can use *the web that burns* an additional time this battle.

R: The skein of pain +8 vs. MD—10 psychic damage, and until the end of the battle, the target takes 1d6 psychic damage each time it fails a save.

C: The web that burns +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)—6 ongoing acid damage
Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).
Limited use: 1/battle.

Goopy webs: When an enemy of level 5 or lower rolls a natural 1–5 with a melee attack against an ettercap supplicant, that enemy is dazed (save ends).

AC	**18**	
PD	14	**HP 44**
MD	17	

Ettercap Warrior

The priestly shuffling and barbaric rage got beaten out of this one. What's left is chitin, poison, and will.

3rd level blocker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Thrusting spear +9 vs. AC—8 damage
Natural 16+: The ettercap warrior can make a *poison bite* attack as a free action.
Natural even miss: 4 damage.

Poison bite +9 vs. AC—6 damage, and 4 ongoing poison damage
Miss: If the target is dazed, hampered, or stuck, it takes 4 damage.

C: Web spray +9 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies in a group)—4 damage
Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).
Natural odd hit: The target is stuck (save ends).
Limited use: 1/battle.

Goopy webs: When an enemy of level 5 or lower rolls a natural 1–5 with a melee attack against an ettercap warrior, that enemy is dazed (save ends).

AC	**20**	
PD	15	**HP 48**
MD	15	

Ettercap Keeper

The leader of the strange sect is draped in ancient webbing from head to toe. The sickly green glow of its eyes matches the glowing gem eyes on the headpiece of the staff it bears. Although you can see only its eyes through the vestments, it seems quite upset you've interrupted the ritual. It remains silent even as it raises the staff toward you.

4th level leader [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +7

Staff and fangs +9 vs. AC—10 damage
Natural even hit or miss: 5 ongoing poison damage.

R: Staff of tongues +9 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—15 psychic damage, and the target can't cast spells or speak (save ends)

C: Her first whisper +9 vs. MD (each nearby enemy engaged with one or more ettercaps)—10 ongoing psychic damage
Limited use: 1/battle.

R: Her other thought +9 vs. MD (one nearby enemy per point on esc. die)—13 psychic damage
Miss: 7 psychic damage.
Limited use: 1/battle.

The web of faith: While one or more lower-level non-mook ettercap allies are nearby it, the ettercap keeper gains *resist damage 16+*.

Goopy webs: When an enemy of level 6 or lower rolls a natural 1–5 with a melee attack against an ettercap keeper, that enemy is dazed (save ends).

AC	**20**	
PD	15	**HP 50**
MD	18	

Building Battles

Obviously, ettercaps are usually found with spiders. Many hunting spiders and giant web spiders grow to extraordinary size within the temples of the ettercaps. Most scholars believe that the masters of phase spiders are ettercap keepers, though little true proof has been found. Some suspect the phase spiders are sent out to locations to collect items the ettercaps learn about from the secrets they gain.

Any group of humanoids could also be encountered around or within an ettercap temple, if the group's leader is trying to gain information from the ettercaps. Most often, it's a group of drow escorting a spider-mage or spider-sorceress trying to gain secrets about a rival.

Ettercaps and the Icons

Crusader: The ettercaps have a working relationship with the Crusader. They provide him with scouts and information on demon infestations. He provides them with safe places to build their fanes once he purges hellhole caverns. Rumors plague some outposts of switching to worship the Silent Weaver (She Who Spins) instead of the Crusader's dark gods. Supposedly, the ettercaps dig out their own fanes underneath the chapels built by the Crusader when the outpost is created. If these stories were proven true, the Crusader's retaliation would be swift and brutal.

Dwarf King: The lord of the underworld chases these foul beings from his territory as much as possible. He doesn't much appreciate them in other territories either, and likes it when his agents set a fane to fire, or crush it beneath a landslide of stone. Some of the Dukes of the underworld, unhappy with the Dwarf King's actions as an icon, have sent envoys to the ettercaps.

Elf Queen: It's an open secret that worship of She Who Spins in Darkness occurs amongst the dark elves. Not all, but enough that a purge would substantially weaken the Queen's position.

Priestess: The foul rites of the ettercaps make her skin crawl. They are a bestial perversion of the clerics and paladins who do her work for the Gods of Light. She is chiefly concerned with the ettercaps' attempts to build fanes in cities and urban areas where the "Light" can't reach. The ettercaps prey upon desperate souls lying in the gutters and huddling in sewers every day. If she can't save them, she's failing her mission.

Prince of Shadows: Nobody likes being hustled in their own territory. The Prince owns the shadows. The ettercaps cover them in webs. The Prince savors secrets like stolen wine. The ettercaps bury them like gravediggers. Of all the creatures in the wide world, ettercaps are the ones that come closest to achieving the undying enmity of the Prince of Shadows. He's willing to deal with them, but the first chance he has to screw them over when his part of the bargain is complete, he'll leap for it. And then blame it on that annoyingly virtuous Great Gold Wyrm.

Of course, there's a more direct way of using ettercaps within the larger stories of the icons. If you're playing 13th Age *something like Jonathan's style (page 196 of the core book), the gods play third-fiddle behind the icons. Perhaps this "She Who Spins in Darkness" is an especially cunning mask for the Prince of Shadows or a plausibly deniable persona of the Elf Queen? The ettercaps might not even consider themselves betrayed by a secret iconic identity for their god—it could be the greatest of their secrets, particularly if more than one icon is at play in a series of what our PC icon mechanics would term* conflicted *relationships.*

Secrets Ettercaps Keep

Adventurers willing to trade secrets can learn many things at an ettercap fane. If they tell a true secret to a supplicant, they can ask for a secret in exchange. The supplicant brings it to a keeper and the keeper gives the secret to She Who Spins in Darkness. If she finds the secret worthy, she will provide a secret to the keeper to give to the asker. It might be something they wish to know, or something else useful. Nobody knows why she enjoys some secrets and rejects others.

Information icons don't want you to know: Obvious things like true names and birthplaces top the list of things the icons don't want anyone knowing. The ettercaps also know how the icons really feel about each other. They also know who has a relationship that can be exploited. People needing to find a way to get an icon to do something can likely find the answer by trading secrets at a fane. The ettercaps also likely know close relations to an icon, like siblings, parents, lovers, and rivals, who could be used as leverage.

Treasures of the previous ages: The ettercaps believe that when She Who Spins in Darkness finally knows every secret, she will rise up and conquer the world. Her army will be equipped with all the glorious magic items the ettercaps know about. Sometimes, giving up the secret about an item is worth something from an adventurer. Treasures from the previous ages are also sought by icons, whose secrets warm the belly of She Who Spins In Darkness.

Forbidden magic: Want to learn a spell without a spell book? Gain the secrets of blood magic? Take the first steps to becoming a lich? All this and more is available to those who seek such tempting power. Spellcasters who want to skip ahead on the road to power seek out the ettercaps to learn ways around "the slow path," but the cost for such knowledge is usually high. Of course, the ettercaps' knowledge could also present a way to take down a foe possessing obscene magical power.

Monster weaknesses: The creatures that cross the path of adventurers often have a weakness those adventurers can exploit. Many are commonly known, but some are known only to a few who survive the monsters. Who else would know where a lich keeps its phylactery? Or the one sword that can pierce a dragon's scaled hide. The ettercaps of course. There's a trade-off, however, because such secrets are only given in exchange for the asker revealing their own biggest weakness.

Names

Ettercap names are never spoken. They are whispered, so they are chock full of sibilant sounds. Male names include Siboth, Thanisak, Shogo, Kilik, and Bothak. Female names include Ellik, Kithala, Nilliath and Vistoline.

The ettercaps also don't speak the name of the dark goddess they worship. Her name is the first secret ettercaps swear to keep. They believe if they were to speak her name aloud in front of non-believers, they would be punished in the most horrible way they could imagine. They do, however, have plenty of nicknames and workarounds for her. Popular epithets include: The Shadow Spinner, The Silent Weaver, and The Mother of the Void.

Adventure Hooks

Chaos Theory—The once orderly webs of the ettercaps show signs of randomness. The fanes are burning and the altars smashed. Has She Who Spins In Darkness been destroyed? Have the ettercaps been subsumed by another master? Has one of the icons declared the utter extinction of the ettercaps for something they did?

Conviction—A human follower of She Who Spins In Darkness named Nethis was sent to the Emperor's nastiest prison. Rather than rot, Nethis has flourished. He's converted a few fellow prisoners and hatched a plan to escape. Except Nethis doesn't want to escape. A secret tunnel leads to a waiting band of ettercaps, ready to turn the prison into the largest above-ground fane in the world.

Double Agent—A dark elf spy for the Elf Queen learns a terrible secret during one of the ettercap rites. Poisoned during his escape and dying, he stumbles across the party and entrusts the secret to one of the PCs. Will the PCs survive the ettercap onslaught to stop the secret from escaping? More importantly, will the PCs use it to damage the icon the secret refers to?

Pandora on the Morrow—A dark elf turncoat makes her way inside the Cathedral. Her sole purpose is to open a gateway to a large fane where hundreds of ettercaps await their chance to storm the Cathedral and desecrate it in the name of their dark goddess. The PCs are on hand, perhaps resting after a terrible battle or invited as guests of the Priestess. They are also the only thing the dark elf didn't take into account for her plan.

Splinter Cell—Sectarian violence breaks out between two camps of ettercaps. Each claims to be the true followers of the Silent Weaver. The splinter group believes that secrets can be shared with Her without the hierarchy of the supplicants and keepers. They are numerous but unskilled. Which group will the heroes side with, if any, to destroy the other?

Frost Giant

Huge blue-skinned ice-warriors and snow-sorcerers!

Frost Giant Society

The popular image of frost giants is that of raiders or mighty kings in castles of ice. The giants of primal ice are in a state of constant war, each claiming absolute rulership of the snow-covered places of the world. Frost giant sagas are full of daring raids that this or that "true" king made against pretenders to the "true" throne. A long time ago there was a single monarch who sat on the ruby and gold Throne at the Top of the World but no ice giant knows where the lost throne now resides despite their endless searches of the tallest peaks.

Frost giants are hierarchical, with the lowest rank being a hetman (the leader of a settlement). Jarls (chieftains) and adligs (nobles) rank next, and kings above them—not only do the many kings and queens fight directly, but the lesser nobles war against each other too. When a powerful leader arises who unites the frost giants, that ruler is invariably betrayed by the lesser nobles who are vying for their power.

An Ill Wind . . .

Frost giants are found where winter winds blow, or more accurately, winter winds blow wherever frost giants are. The most obvious place to find frost giants is on the snow-covered peaks of the Giantwalk Mountains or the Frost Range, or wading across the mighty Knee Deep. The glittering ice palaces of the giants can be seen on a clear day from the foothills of the mountains, tempting foolhardy adventurers to go in search of treasure. Such adventurers rarely return, having come to their end in the mountains long before they ever see a giant.

The giants do make war, and they bring winter with them. When snow starts falling out of season it usually means the frost giants have left their mountain homes and are on the march. Although not a regular occurrence, such "fimbulwinters" can last for years, requiring the Emperor and his dragon riders to intervene. The Empire usually sides with the weaker Ice King or Ice Queen, using dragon fire to tip the balance until the stronger foe is defeated and the weaker foe is unable to hold the territory they have gained in war.

frost giant adventurer

The frost giants war with each other for many reasons: sometimes over ownership of the giant dire aurochs that graze high in the mountains, sometimes to seize treasures from each other, and sometimes for the simple pleasure of it or to revisit old grudges.

They also war with other giants. Wars between fire giants and frost giants are usually vicious yet short, with neither side having the stomach for extended conflict. Wars between storm or cloud giants and frost giants are more protracted affairs, with the overworld giants swooping in on their clouds to steal away cattle and treasure and frost giants stealing clouds to raid back. During such wars frost giants have been known to fall from the sky onto Imperial lands without warning, their clouds dumping both snow and fallen warriors to the land beneath.

Frost giant pirates live apart from their kin—using their cold-based powers they create iceberg ships that they sail from port to port, raiding as they go. Rogue frost giants are a hazard to almost every coastal city in the Empire, and every dockside tavern has at least one salty sea dog who has a tale of woe involving icebergs and chain-and-hook wielding giant pirates.

Bergship Raider

A chill mist rises as an iceberg appears on the horizon. Are those sails?

Large 7th level spoiler [GIANT]
Initiative: +10
Vulnerability: fire

Whirling ice hook +13 vs. AC—50 damage, and the target takes a –5 penalty to disengage checks until the end of its next turn
Miss: 15 damage to each enemy engaged with the giant.

R: Frost chain +13 vs. AC (one nearby enemy or far away enemy at –2 atk)—40 damage, and the target is pulled next to the giant, who engages it

Ancient cold: While battling one or more frost giants, there is only a 50% chance that the escalation die increases at the start of the round.

Resist cold 16+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Winter's bite: When the escalation die is odd, each enemy engaged with the raider takes 35 cold damage at the start of its turn.

Nastier Specials

Overbearing: Twice per battle, the raider can make a *knockdown* attack as a quick action (once per round).
Knockdown +10 vs. PD (one enemy smaller than it)—20 damage, and the target can't disengage until the end of its next turn

AC	**21**	
PD	20	**HP 270**
MD	18	

Ice Sorceress

As if being a giant wasn't enough, this frost giant knows magic. The cold can do strange things to the mind of a mortal.

Large 7th level caster [GIANT]
Initiative: +10
Vulnerability: fire

Icicle staff +14 vs. AC—20 damage, 20 cold damage, and the sorceress can make an *icy delusions* attack against the target as a free action

R: Winter wind +14 vs. PD—55 cold damage
Natural even hit or miss: The sorceress can make an *icy delusions* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Icy delusions +14 vs. MD (one enemy)**—At the start of each round, the target loses 2d6 points from their initiative count as they slowly freeze from the inside out (save ends)
Frozen flesh: When a creature is reduced to 0 initiative or lower from *icy delusions*, it becomes delusional and frozen and must choose one condition that will affect it: confused (hard save ends, 16+); OR stunned (save ends). After saving, the creature rerolls its initiative.

Ice summoner: Once per round as a free action, the giant can make an *ice wall* attack to conjure forth a wall of ice that stops one enemy's movement or ranged attack. The giant can't use this ability to target creatures making fire attacks or wielding weapons that deal fire damage.
C: Ice wall +14 vs. PD (one moving enemy or ranged attacker)—The target stops its movement or loses its ranged attack that turn, and the wall of ice remains until the end of the battle (GM's choice on its size, but it shouldn't be too large or thick; normal DC to break through it)

Ancient cold: While battling one or more frost giants, there is only a 50% chance that the escalation die increases at the start of the round.

Resist cold 16+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Nastier Specials

Ice armor: The ice sorceress has *resist damage 16+* unless the attack deals fire damage.

AC	**23**	
PD	22	**HP 190**
MD	17	

Frost Giant Adventurer

Often the first into the fray, the frost giant adventurer scatters its foes like fifteen pins. Yes, giants play with fifteen pins. And they're a lot bigger than your dwarven ten-pins.

Large 8th level spoiler [GIANT]
Initiative: +13
Vulnerability: fire

Overlarge club +13 vs. AC (one nearby enemy or one enemy engaged with giant)—75 damage
Natural even hit: The target loses its next move action, and if it's engaged with the giant, it pops free.

Ancient cold: While battling one or more frost giants, there is only a 50% chance that the escalation die increases at the start of the round.

Blood of the niefelheim: When an enemy the frost giant adventurer is engaged with scores a critical hit against the giant, that enemy is hampered (hard save ends, 16+).

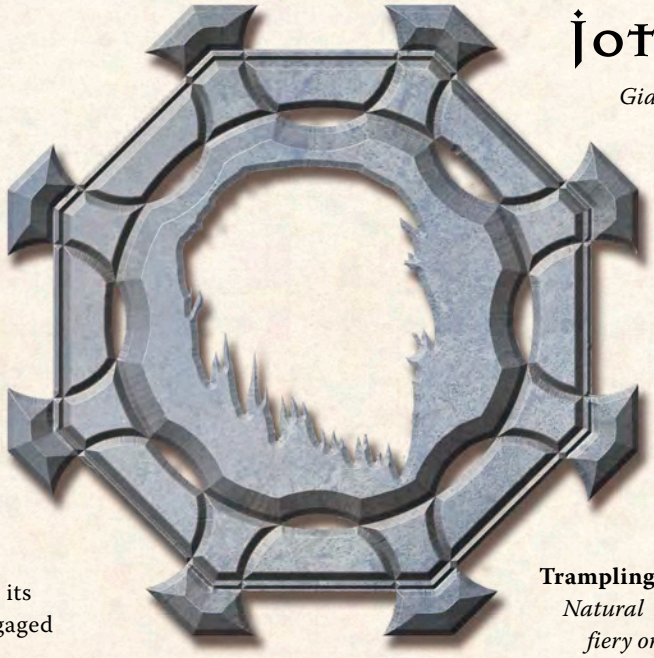
Resist cold 16+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**24**	
PD	23	**HP 280**
MD	18	

Social Giants?

Many campaigns will want to use frost giants as pure and uncomplicated elemental threats. But a different style of campaign could use a frost giant society that is less based on war for war's sake and more based on herding. Maybe the frost giant society is built of competing clans of herdsmen who lead their giant dire aurochs to the high pastures beyond the clouds. Constant inter-clan cattle raids and wars over pastures and herds means that frost giants fight with each other as much as anyone else. Nothing about the frost giants as monsters needs to change if you give them a society that's a bit less monstrous, especially since "little people" like humans and dwarves just get in the herds' way.

For inspiration for such frost giants, instead of Norse mythology look to historical Scottish inter-clan warfare or perhaps to the Irish tale *Táin Bó Cúailnge* involving the legendary "warp-spasming" hero Cú Chulainn (who in some later tales involving the folk hero Finn McCool is himself depicted as a giant).



Jotun Auroch

Giant frost- or fire-breathing cows! It's said that if you can milk one of these monstrous beasts the frost giants will respect you. That might just be a frost giant trick to place would-be heroes in ludicrous positions.

Ownership of these herds is a cause of constant raiding between fire giants and frost giants . . . and even storm giants crave the spicy milk of the giant auroch.

Huge 6th level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +7

Trampling hooves +8 vs. PD—6 damage
Natural 1–5: The jotun auroch can make a *fiery or frosty breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Fiery or Frosty breath +10 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—5 fire or cold damage, depending on what the jotun auroch has been eating lately

Resist cold and fire 18+: When a cold or fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 70 (mook)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one jotun auroch mook for every 70 damage you deal to the mob (herd).

Big Sack of Hit Points

The jotun auroch is not a combat threat. It has hit points like a huge mook but its damage output is tiny, worse than a normal mook a few levels down. They can be more or less ignored when building battles, though the herd shouldn't be infinite, because that's boring. A jotun aurochs is big, but it's basically a cow, and "battles" involving jotun aurochs should pivot around frost and fire giants who are trying to rustle, herd, or protect the herd while the PCs are in the way. Attacking the herd will make you an enemy of the giants forever. That's not a *bad* thing.

Winter Beast

Frost giants have an affinity for animals who can withstand the cold. Such beasts often accompany bergship raiders as shock troops to break down barricades and instill fear before the pirates themselves charge into battle.

Large 6th level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +7

Fang, claw, or tusk +11 vs. AC—21 damage, and the beast's special ability triggers

Winter Beast Special Ability: Choose ONE

Armored polar bear: The target takes 10 extra damage, and if the target makes an opportunity attack against the polar bear before the start of the bear's next turn, the bear can make a *fang, claw, or tusk* attack against the target as a free action.

Giant walrus: The target takes 14 extra damage and is stuck (save ends; also ends if the walrus moves)

Winter wolf: The target takes 14 extra damage, or 28 extra damage if another winter wolf is engaged with it.

Resist cold 12+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 170**
MD	14	

Ice Zombie

The past victims of frost giants sometimes attain a sort of half-life. Frozen rock-solid by the cold, ice zombies are found in glacier walls near ice giant palaces or stumbling away from bergships as they defrost.

6th level mook [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +5
Vulnerability: fire, holy

Chill claws +11 vs. AC—12 cold damage

Icy breath of the grave +11 vs. PD—9 cold damage, and the target is vulnerable to cold attacks (save ends)

Resist cold 18+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Fiery decapitation: Ice zombies have frozen, iron-hard flesh that makes them tougher than normal zombies—critical hits that deal fire damage deal triple damage to ice zombies; other critical hits just deal double damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	22	**HP 20 (mook)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one ice zombie mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.

Building Battles

Frost giants like pets and have strong connections to such beasts, whether it's aurochs, dire and winter wolves, remorhaz, giant walrusses, dire polar bears, or similar creatures. They rarely work with other giants, though occasionally they may hire bands of hill giants to perform manual labor for them. White dragons are sometimes allied with frost giants as partners, pets, or rulers. Fire giants can be part of a battle, but usually only in situations where the frost and fire giants are fighting each other and the PCs get in the middle of it.

Frost Giants and the Icons

Archmage: *"From the frozen north and the high places they come. Warriors, raiders, incarnate winter. Those who can make it to their glittering castles of ice can expect hospitality according to the laws and traditions of the giants, but never mistake the bringers of ice as allies or friends."* —Zetuvit of Kal-Torth, survivor of the Mist Glades massacre

Dwarf King: *"The giants say they rule the mountains, but these mountains are dwarf lands from deep root to high peak."* —Darkgrim Giantkiller

Emperor: *"I've tangled with giants. Fought in the fimbulwinter seventeen summers ago when the dragon riders sent those brutes crying back to their cold caves. Lost three toes from frostbite."* —Captain Davis (retired), 14th Legion ("Blood and Thunderers")

Orc Lord: *"Giant ankles. Good eating. Giants not come back here."* —Grushnuck Anklebiter, explaining her deed-name

Priestess: *"The frost giants and fire giants are mentioned in the eschatological writings of seventeen different and otherwise unrelated prophecies. Ten of the prophecies say they will unite against the gods and end the world, four prophecies say that their internecine wars will directly end the world, and three prophecies say that one will kill the other and plunge the world into eternal burning summer or a forever winter. The Priestess continues to intercede with the gods on our behalf, praise be."* —Sister Magda of the Order of St Pernex

Names

Female ice giant names are Adelheid, Agnetha. Anni-Frid, Birgitta, Brunhilde, Dagfrid, Gertrud, Kerttuli, Vangridde. Male names include Aegr, Broddur, Baldur, Dunaldur, Eryk, Fridleif, Runlvur, Sigmur, Torfin, Ulrik, Vangur. Children tend to be named after whoever their most famous parent is—Magnus son of Dagfrid is "Magnus Dagfridson," and his daughter Bjork would be "Bjork Magnussdottir." Occasionally a whole family will gain a deed name passed down from firstborn to firstborn; names such as Bulettehammer or Hagsbane are treasured possessions giving the giant a lot to live up to.

Things Found in a Frost Giant's Ice Castle

Throne made of ice. Big sacks of gold. Giant spoon and a bowl of porridge large enough to swim in. A collar and chain for a trained remorhaz. Table knife large enough to be used as a two-handed sword. Maps of the lowlands, with ultra-accurate cartography that only comes from being able to get a giant's eye view. Frozen adventurers.

Frost Giant Terrain Effects & Environments

Use these optional rules once or twice a campaign when it feels dramatically appropriate.

When the party travels to the dwelling places of the frost giants have each player make an appropriate skill check against the DC given. If a PC fails by 5 or less, suggest two things from the list and let them pick one. If they fail by 6 or more, instead suggest two things from the list and let them pick one, and give them another thing from the list also. Recoveries lost are gone until the party can find a place of warmth and safety where they can rest and take a full heal-up, with some form of food and drinkable water.

If a PC chooses to lose some piece of equipment, make sure to penalize them on future skill checks or in similar ways until they can replace it or until they are out of the dangerous environment.

Note: The remorhaz entry has generic terrain effects for arctic adventures which you can mix in here. Frost giants sometimes keep remorhaz as pets or as warbeasts to tunnel into other frost giants' castles, so remorhaz tunnels might be present in the mountains.

High Meadow Night: DC 25 (20 with a lit fire and prior preparation)

The pine trees and flowers look pleasant while the sun shines, but come nightfall the temperature drops low enough to kill the unprepared.

- The cold gets to you. Lose a recovery.
- You mis-pitch the tents, cause the shelter to blow over, or make some other life-attenuating mistake. Each of your allies who succeeded on their check must reroll it.
- Wild animals sneak into camp and steal your food; each PC must roll a save. On a failure, that PC chooses one: lose a recovery OR lose a useful piece of equipment (the animals dragged away something that wasn't food).
- You encounter hungry dire wolves or dire bears and must battle them.
- Choose another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their check with a –4 penalty.

Icy Cliff: DC 30 (25 with proper equipment)

The wind tries to pluck you away from the rock face. Beneath you the void yawns invitingly.

- You are freezing! Lose a recovery.
- You cause a rockslide. Each of your allies who succeeded on their check must reroll it.
- Frigid winds; each PC must roll a save. On a failure, the PC chooses one: lose a recovery OR lose a useful piece of equipment.
- The ice-bridge over a crevasse breaks. Choose another PC to lose two recoveries, or lose one recovery yourself.
- Avalanche! Each PC loses a recovery and a piece of useful equipment. Or choose another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their check with a –4 penalty.

High Peaks: DC 35

Cold. So hard to breathe. Sunlight so bright.

- The cold gets to you. Lose a recovery.
- Sudden loss of visibility. Each of your allies who succeeded on their check must reroll it.
- Frigid winds; each PC must roll a save. On a failure, that PC chooses one: lose a recovery OR lose a useful piece of equipment.
- Thin air. Each PC loses a recovery.
- Avalanche! Each PC loses a recovery and a piece of useful equipment. Or choose another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their check with a –4 penalty.

Adventure Hooks

Ascent into the Heights—The adventurers' patron wants them to place an artifact at the top of a mountain, but first they need to get past the frost giants. Unknown to the PCs, the item calls to the giants on the wind.

Castle in the Borderlands—A frost giant named Gunnhilda Jarlsblood strides into town and rips the roof off the tavern. She wants to hire adventurers to scout out a rival's castle that lies on the border between two frost giant kingdoms. A giant scouting the area would be spotted and ripped apart by the dire wolves and remorhaz that guard the castle, but tiny people like the adventurers might just be able to sneak inside and get a look about. If the adventurers help her she'll reward them. If they refuse she'll have her clan flatten every tavern the adventurers have ever had a drink in.

Frost Giant Steading—A band of frost giants has been raiding the lands below their mountain home. The adventurers are hired to "punish" the giants and discourage further raiding. The adventurers can keep any spoils they find, but they will face punishment if they fail to stop the raids. The chieftain of the clan (Evad Grugnursdottir) has extensive dungeons beneath her fortress and has amassed a small army of monstrous races that lair within and help her clan raid the lowlands.

Glacier of the Frost Giant Riffur—A frost giant named Riffur Karlsberg is amassing an army of remorhaz, which he intends to unleash on the lowlands to create a permanent frostlands. Wild dire wolves, remorhaz, and snow-white owlbears all stand between the adventurers and ending this menace.

Hall of the Frost Giant Queen—A white dragon (Stálmaga) has forged an alliance with the frost giant queen who rules the castle and lands around an ice volcano. The dragon has gathered together ice-wizards and frost-witches of many races and is attempting to divert the path of ley lines into the ice-volcano. Representatives from icons who normally are at odds approach the adventurers wanting them to stop the impending winterpocalypse.

Ice of Dread—Some frost giant ice pirates are sailing their bergship toward the adventurers' favorite town. They intend to raid and let their giant dire aurochs graze. Can the adventurers stop the pirates? When the pirates land, however, they present a thousand year old deed to the land, claiming they own it.

Tomb of Frozen Horrors—Something happened high in the mountains, something that left misshapen monsters frozen as blocks of ice inside a vast glittering cavern. The entombed creatures are starting to defrost and raid the region, and the adventurers need to gain the help of an ice sorceress, the haughty and distrustful Brunhild Fairhair, to locate the cave.

White Feather Mountain—A peaceful frost giant named Eryk the Yellowbeard wants nothing to do with his neighbors' warlike ways and hires the adventurers to hide three treasures from them: a giant trident, a huge hammer, and a black iron sword. The treasures are not magical and are too large to be used by the adventurers, but every other giant in the area wants them.

Yo Jumbo—The frost giants are on the march to war, and the adventurers are right in their path. Both warring clans (the Sons of Marhupt and the Daughters of the Ice-Hawk) think the adventurers are working for the other side. Can the adventurers turn the giants against each other or will they need to fight against the giants?

FUNGALOID

"They moved slowly toward us, pallid and strange. Their pentaplicate eye-clusters squirmed with alien emotions. As their spores settled upon us we started to hear their slow yeasty thoughts. Sir Blackwall and his squire Haggerston were the first to succumb, plate-like growths sprouting from the joints in their armor as they fell to their knees in a final ecstasy. Hayne and the Dutchess were next, speared through with iron-wood arrows that seemed to sprout from their bodies. Boekel the Sage and I found the rope back to the surface and started climbing. It's true what they say—you don't have to be fast, just faster than the other person. Pity about Boekel."

—Kamad of the Tower, sole survivor

One Race, Many Shapes, Uncertain Origins

Fungaloids are a single species but come in many varieties. When a fungal kingdom appears the fungi form into the shapes needed to fulfill the functions of the kingdom. There are slow farmer fungi, fast warrior fungi, huge guardian fungi, non-sentient fungi, and of course, the intelligent fungaloid monarchs who rule their dark kingdoms. Fungal kingdoms are found all over the world, in the most unusual places. There are several theories for why that might be . . .

- They are the remnants of a prehistoric civilization. While their living fungus cities and devices have perished, a remnant of the civilization lives on. They are fading, the last creatures from a time before vertebrates walked the world.
- They appear everywhere because they sporate, and their spores eventually find a fertile environment. They have a diffuse underground kingdom in the deep reaches of the underworld and communicate over vast distances through mycotic threads that run through the rock itself.
- They are a mighty civilization that is alien to other cultures, with motivations unknowable to non-fungaloid life. They have perfect racial memory, and due to serial reincarnation, operate on long geologic time scales. The rise and fall of mighty empires is nothing to them, a mere blink of time to those that are truly undying.

All or none of the above might be true. It's up to the GM to decide what the real truth is.

Fungal Attacks

Some fungaloids can make special attacks, usually triggered with a natural 16+ attack roll, though the attacks can be used as a standard action too in some cases. When building fungaloid battles, decide what sort of attack or attacks these fungaloids have. The monster entries will tell you how many attacks to pick. Add the fungaloid creature's level to attacks and damage, as indicated.

C: Poison tentacles 5 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—3 + level poison damage, and the target is vulnerable to *fungal attacks* (save ends)

C: Brown noise 5 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—3 + level ongoing thunder damage

C: Hallucinogenia 3 + level vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—The target is confused (easy save ends, 6+)

C: Infectious spores 5 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—3 + level ongoing poison damage

C: Piercing shriek 5 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—4 + level psychic damage

Fungaloid Creeper

Squat little mushroom "folk" that feast on dead things. They have the unfortunate habit of jabbing and scraping living beings until the non-fungaloid cooperates by falling over dead.

1st level troop [PLANT]
Initiative: +3

Probing tendrils +6 vs. AC (1d3 attacks)—2 damage
Natural 18+: The target is stuck until the end of its next turn.
Natural 1-5: Both the fungaloid and its target take 1d4 damage.

Food is here: When a fungaloid creeper scores a critical hit with an attack, all nearby fungaloids move to engage the fungaloid's target, even if that target has dropped to 0 hp. The move is a free action, and engaged creepers can roll disengage attempts instead of taking opportunity attacks.

Slow, rolling wave: Whenever the escalation die is even, each creeper must succeed on a normal save at the start of its turn or lose its move action that turn.

Nastier Specials
Fungal attack—Make ONE fungal attack

AC	**16**	
PD	15	**HP 30**
MD	10	

Aerial Spore

It floats serene, red and deadly. The long tendrils push it spasmodically as it crawl-drifts closer, flickers of bioluminescence pulsing through its small, languid body.

2nd level mook [PLANT]
Initiative: +1

C: Stinging tendrils +6 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—4 poison damage, and the target is weakened until the end of its next turn

Puffball exploder: The first time each round an aerial spore in the battle drops to 0 hp, it explodes and 1d3 nearby non-fungus non-construct creatures are covered in spores and begin to choke. Until the end of the battle, when a choking creature rolls a natural 1–5 on an attack roll, it takes damage equal to the natural roll. If a creature is affected twice by this attack, the damage it takes on a natural 1–5 doubles; if affected three times, it triples, etc.

Spores: A creature choking from *puffball exploder* can use a standard action to wash the spores off itself and/or cough them up, preventing further choking effects until it's affected by *puffball exploder* again.

Weightless: The aerial spore floats upon air currents, but it prefers to stay within 5 to 7 feet of the ground so it can use its tendrils to keep it in place or propel it. A free-floating spore too far away from the ground to use its tendrils can easily be blown about from strong winds or similar magical effects.

AC	**15**	
PD	9	**HP 7 (mook; *puffball exploder*)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one aerial spore mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob.

Sporrior

Fungi are not known for being fast, but this one is. A strange pale ape-dog thing, with a head that hinges open to unleash a high-speed spore attack. Clouds of choking fungus accompany chitinous darts launched by compressed air.

2nd level wrecker [PLANT]
Initiative: +10

Chitinous bite +7 vs. AC—5 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The sporrior can make a *spore cloud* attack this turn as a quick action.

R: Parasitic darts +6 vs. AC (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—5 poison damage
Natural even hit or miss: The sporrior can make a *spore cloud* attack this turn as a quick action.

C: Spore cloud +6 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—4 poison damage

Sprinter: A sporrior gains an extra move action when the escalation die is odd.

Wall-crawler: A sporrior can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

AC	**18**	
PD	16	**HP 36**
MD	12	

Fungaloid Drudge

Some look like walking mushrooms with arms and faces, others are clearly skeletons that have become infested with spores, and still others are shambling mounds pulling crude carts with their misshapen limbs. It's the jolly ones with waistcoats and pipes that worry people the most.

3rd level troop [PLANT]
Initiative: +5

Pitchfork +8 vs. AC—10 damage
Natural 16+: The drudge can make a *fungal attack* this turn as a quick action.

Fungal attack—Make ONE fungal attack

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 32**
MD	13	

Braincap

This lumbering creature resembles nothing so much as a huge multi-legged fungal brain with a toadstool hat.

Double-strength 3rd level wrecker [PLANT]
Initiative: +5

Programmed brain: During its turn when one or more nearby enemies are staggered, the braincap uses *focused brain blast.* When no enemies are staggered, the braincap uses *hallucinogenia* if its hit points are even, and *psionic filaments* if its hit points are odd.

R: Focused brain blast +8 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away staggered enemy)—21 force damage
Miss: 5 psychic damage.

C: Hallucinogenia +8 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—The target is confused (easy save ends, 6+) and vulnerable to psychic damage until the end of the battle
Miss: The target sees odd colors at the corners of its vision until it has taken a full heal-up (–2 penalty to skill checks to see things).

C: Psionic filaments +8 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—15 psychic damage

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

AC	**19**	
PD	13	**HP 90**
MD	17	

Fungaloid Monarch

It looks like an elf, or a fungus' dream of an elf. It's almost beautiful, but there is something odd about the way that it moves that makes it a creature of nightmare.

Double-strength 4h level leader [PLANT]
Initiative: +8

Mycotic scepter +9 vs. AC—24 damage
Natural 12+: One nearby fungaloid can make a *fungal attack* as a free action.
Natural 16+: Up to three nearby fungaloids can each make a *fungal attack* as a free action.
Natural 20: Up to five nearby fungaloids can each make a *fungal attack* as a free action.

Group mind: The monarch's attacks deal +1 damage for each other allied creature with the plant type in the battle (max +10).

Drudge-summons: If there are not enough nearby fungaloids to use up all the *fungal attacks* granted by the *mycotic scepter*, skip the extra fungal attacks but add a full-strength fungaloid drudge to the battle next to the fungaloid monarch.

AC	**20**	
PD	14	**HP 98**
MD	18	

Fungaloid Empress

A huge fungus moves into the tunnel as hundreds of smaller shapes bulge and warp languidly inside its flesh. Thick choking clouds of spores pump from wheezing orifices on what may be its face or flank—it's hard to tell. Everywhere fungi spontaneously flourish into toxic life.

Huge 4th level wrecker [PLANT]
Initiative: +15

Crushing limbs +9 vs. AC (1d3 enemies engaged with the empress)—18 damage

Combat womb: At the end of each of the empress' turns, if there are fewer than two elder spores (see below) per enemy, add a number of elder spores to the battle so that there are two spores per enemy. A spore can "sprout" already engaged with a nearby or far away enemy or on its own, it's up to you.

Sporulating spiracles: Fungus grows on everything in the area! Whenever a non-fungus creature attempts to move, it must make a DC 18 Dexterity or Strength check to do so or it loses its move action. If the creature uses a standard action to clear away fungus, it can move normally that turn.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 170**
MD	18	

Elder Spore

4th level mook [PLANT]
Initiative: Directly after the empress in the initiative order

Slime spikes +9 vs. AC—6 poison damage

AC	**18**	
PD	12	**HP 7 (mook)**
MD	16	

Mook: Kill one elder spore mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob.

Building Battles

Those who ally with fungaloids do well to remember that, ultimately, the plant creatures view all organic beings as short-term mobile nutrient storage. This truth may explain their willingness to work and fight alongside a number of beings who they couldn't possibly see as allies in the sense that humanoids use the term.

In the underworld, they ally with derro (who don't seem to mind, or even acknowledge, the alienness of the plants), drow, and occasionally trogs (fungaloids are about the only creatures that trog stench doesn't bother). They will sometimes even use other intelligent plant creatures as guards when there are plenty of nutrients in an area and the other plants aren't stealing resources. Undead such as zombies and skeletons are often encountered in the same areas as the fungaloids, though the plants are usually feeding on the creature's dead flesh; it can make for interesting and deadly hybrids between the two types of creatures.

Fungaloid Environments

Fungal kingdoms and the areas around them have a definite terrain type: *everything is covered in fungus.* Use one or more of these rules when you like.

Flammable: Some fungi are surprisingly dry and will explode at the slightest hint of open flame. A character who fumbles an attack or skill check while using fire magic, or holding a torch, lantern, or some sort of open flame takes 3d6 damage.

Gloomy: Thick spore clouds partially block out the sun above ground; below ground, glowing plate-like fungus gives sickly illumination.

Sickly: The fungus chokes other life. During a full heal-up each non-fungus non-construct character in the area must roll a d20.

1–5: The character can choose to regain full hit points or regain lost recoveries but not both.

6+: The character regains hit points and recoveries as normal.

Slippery: Fungus conceals the ground and slime covers rocks. Any creature that fumbles a skill check outside of combat falls into a pit and takes damage determined by how infested the environment is:

Adventurer tier:	1d10
Champion tier:	2d10
Epic tier:	3d12

Toxic Yet Delicious: Those who know what to look for will never go hungry in a fungal kingdom, but those that fail to check what they eat will suffer horrific pains from ingesting toxins. There are even types of fungus that grow in the stomachs of unwary adventurers, bursting them from the inside out. Finding safe edible fungus in this terrain requires a DC 20 skill check. When a character searching for food rolls under the DC, they take the difference between the two results in damage five minutes after eating the fungus. (The GM should make the roll for the character and keep the result secret. *"Are you sure you want to eat it?"*)

Fungaloids and the Icons

Archmage: Wizards often pretend otherwise, but they're usually fascinated by the fungaloids as a source of unique spell components and as walking underworld laboratories. Depending on your campaign's Archmage, fungaloids might or might not have a toehold in the sewers of Horizon.

Diabolist: The dark princess allows fungaloid kingdoms to bloom in the open in Hell Marsh, toxic realms full of ravenous fungus-hellspawn hybrids. She figures that any of her demons that can't deal with mushroom people probably can't handle any of her real enemies.

Dwarf King: The Dwarf King lives in an uneasy and unspoken truce with the fungal kingdoms. His mines pierce deep into fungaloid territories and disputes and skirmishes are common. The dwarves have held back on outright war, since some fungaloids placate the dwarves with artifacts they have recovered from the lightless depths.

Elf Queen: The Court of Stars wants nothing to do with "common" fungaloids, even monarchs and empresses. Fungaloid "princes," on the other hand, are amusing, so twygzogs who conduct themselves with aplomb may be welcome.

High Druid: The speaker for all living things sees fungaloids as natural inhabitants of their domain, at least as natural as humans. Of course death is also natural, so it's not like the High Druid is actively protecting the fungaloid domains near Eld. Even so, the degree of tolerance the High Druid shows to fungaloids brings several to her cause every generation.

Prince of Shadows: The ability for scattered fungaloid kingdoms to communicate over vast distances undetected has been a boon to the Prince of Shadows, who is rumored to have a fungaloid lieutenant or alias named Nightcap.

ASH's original vision of the fungaloids was that they went all the way to 10th level. I spoiled that plan. I see them as adventurer-tier threats, the kind of problem that serious heroes eclipse. If your campaign starts to hinge on underworld plant threats, feel free to postulate an Empress of Empresses seeking to pull down the surface world's Emperor—it's certainly easy to push the fungaloid stats up through champion tier..

Things Found in a Fungal Kingdom

Pile of fungus growing on a discarded pouch of coins. Fungus. Luminous fungus. Decaying wood with fungus growing on it. Rotting leather armor, full of fungal threads. Rocks, covered in slick fungal slime. Compressed-fungus tools for farming fungus. Cart made of compressed fungus, full of fertilizer for fungus, with fungus growing in it. Mushrooms.

Fungaloids can make use of magic items, but choose not to create any. Why bother when you can spawn more drudges or call upon a sporrior?

Names

Ambulatory fungi communicate simple concepts among themselves using combinations of vibrations and sounds inaudible to the ears of others. Complex and detailed information is transmitted through clouds of spores that can linger in the still air of the underworld for hours. Many adventurers have tried to bluff their way past a fungaloid only to be undone by the story that the invisible spores clinging to their bodies tell (increase such DCs by 5).

Some humanoid fungi can speak in ways that other non-fungus creatures can understand. Since fungi carry their life stories around with them in spore clouds, they have no need for names among their own kind, therefore mycotic life forms choose names they know outsiders will associate with fungi: Amanita, Boletuz, Chanterelle, Calvatia, Coprinuz, Eukarita, Gyromitra, Maitake, Morchella, Omphalotus, Preaxostyla, Portobello, Porcini, Peziza, Suillus.

Adventure Hooks

Against the Fungus—Fungus is spreading rapidly through the underworld and will cut a drow city off from the Queen's influence. Will the adventurers choose to turn away from the area or to make use of it somehow?

Expedition beneath the Giantwalk Peaks—The characters learn of a lost city, an amber castle, a map, and a hostile fungal kingdom guarding it.

In Search of the Unmapped—The Dwarf King will pay adventurers to map an underworld route between Forge and Glitterhagen. A fungal kingdom sits at a vital intersection of caverns, on an isle of dread on a dark lake.

Scourge of the Slave Pits—A fungal kingdom has begun taking slaves from the surface. Fungi can just make more fungal workers, why do they need slaves? Are they trading slaves, and if so, for what?

Temple of Fundamental Fungus—Many fungal kingdoms have come together to build a temple dedicated to an evil underworld entity. The PCs are enlisted to find out why.

Womb of Horrors—A mycotic empress has been spotted breaching the surface of the KneeDeep and wading downstream. Can the adventurers stop it before the farms that feed Axis are buried under fungal blooms?

Mycotic Twygzogs

Fungal kingdoms occasionally develop fungaloids that are able to cooperate and interact with other races as equals. Such creatures are called twygzogs (twig-zos), which roughly translates to "*noble*" or *"prince"* (though outsiders often just called them "Zogs"). Twygzogs are very rare, perhaps because they are such freaks—they have lost the pure connection with the fungal overmind that characterizes other fungaloids but gained free will.

Twygzogs resemble surface races, but are bald and pale and have fungal gills where their hair should be. They have the uncanny ability to shift their flesh to resemble others, though their mushroom complexions and huge pale eyes mean they can't pass for a member of another race without an additional disguise or magic. Twygzogs don't sleep, but they do need to rest from physical exertion for at least six hours a day (four hours if in damp loamy soil, or eight hours if in a harsh environment).

If you want to play a mycotic prince or princess (they can choose to look like *either* though are really *neither*) talk to your GM. Fungal PCs certainly won't suit every game, but if they fit into your game as a playable race, here are rules for them.

Twygzog

+2 Str OR +2 Con

Your creature type is plant instead of humanoid.

Fungal Biology (Racial Power)

Once battle per battle when you fail a saving throw (including a death save), reroll the save and abide by the reroll.

Champion Feat: You gain a bonus to fungal biology saves equal to your Constitution modifier.

Champion Feat [fungal survivor]: Whenever you would deal miss damage with a melee attack, you can choose to instead heal hit points equal to your level.

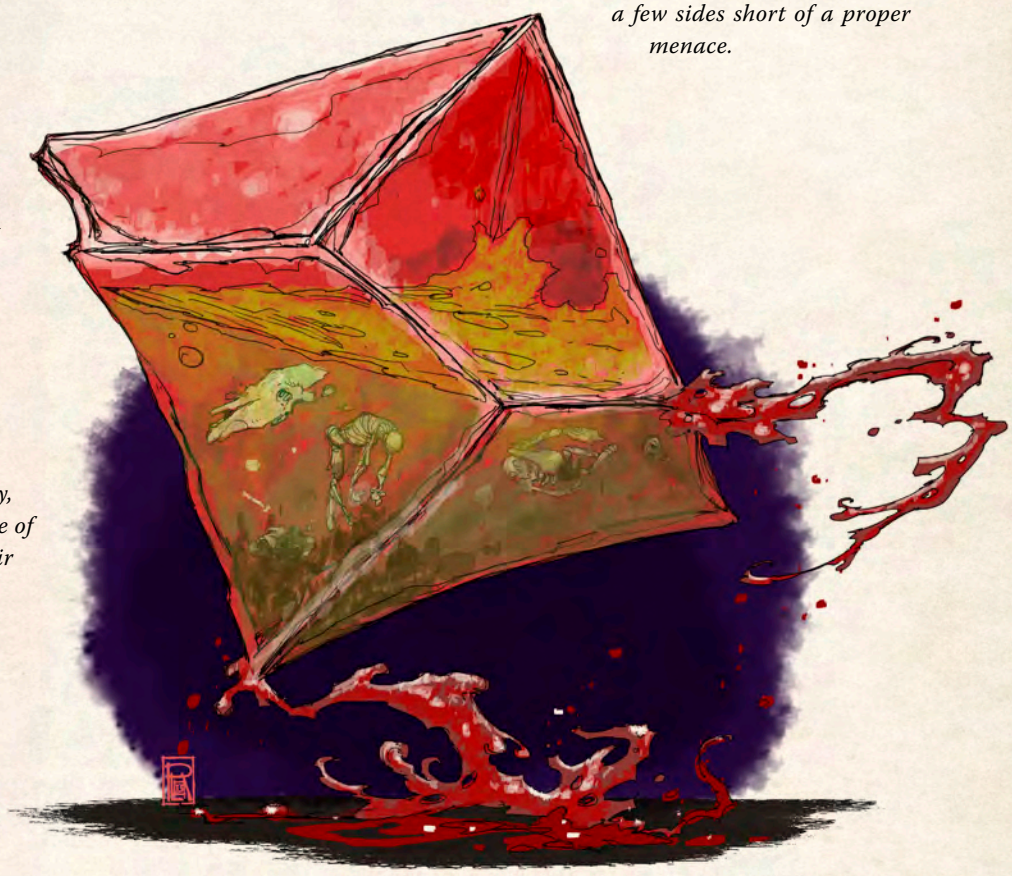
Fungal Companion [Talent]

You sprout a tiny fungal minion. Use the rules for the Wizard's Familiar talent. Twygzogs who take this feat can have the fungal minion and a regular familiar or companion granted by class features or feats. In order to sprout a fungal companion you must spend a talent, replacing one of your class talents with the Fungal Companion talent.

Jonathan and I weren't planning to put races into monster books. And I don't know that I would have imagined that we would start with a fungaloid. It's good to be surprised.

Gelahedron

Apparently the community of evil experimental wizards decided that the traditional gelatinous cube was a few sides short of a proper menace.



For All Oozes

All oozes have the following two abilities:

Flows where it likes: The ooze is immune to opportunity attacks.

Ooze: The ooze is immune to effects. When an attack applies a condition to an ooze (dazed, hampered, weakened, ongoing damage, etc.), that condition doesn't affect it.

Gelatinous Tetrahedron

The ooze whips out a tentacle, grasps an enemy, and flings it through the air to the opposite side of the cavern. Gelatinous tetrahedrons prefer their meals pulped . . .

Huge 4th level blocker [ooze]
Initiative: +3

Shlup'n'schlorp +9 vs. PD—22 acid damage, and the tetrahedron engulfs the target (functions like a grab; see below) if it's smaller than the tetrahedron
Miss: The tetrahedron can make a *spasms* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Spasms +9 vs. AC (up to 2 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy)**—11 damage

Engulf and dissolve: Targets engulfed/grabbed (*13th Age* core book, page 172) by the tetrahedron take 22 acid damage at the start of the cube's turn but are not viable targets for additional attacks by the tetrahedron. Multiple targets can be held within the tetrahedron simultaneously.

Any engulfed creature that is also staggered must begin making last gasp saves (page 200 of core rules) or become paralyzed as the tetrahedron's toxins overwhelm it.

Instinctive actions: Gelatinous creatures have no brains, sometimes they just *do things*. When the escalation die is odd, instead of making an attack or moving, roll a d4 to see what the tetrahedron does. If an option is not viable (you roll a 1 but there is no engaged enemy), reroll until you get a valid option.

1. **C: Fling +9 vs. PD (one engaged enemy)**—14 damage, and the target pops free from the ooze and must roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, it loses its next move action
2. **C: Fling +9 vs. PD (one nearby enemy not engaged with the ooze)**—28 damage, and the target is flung somewhere nearby and must roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, it loses its next move action
3. **C: Fling +9 vs. PD (one far away enemy)**—42 damage, and the target is flung somewhere far away and must roll an easy save (6+); on a failure, it loses its next move action
4. As a standard action the ooze quickly moves around the battlefield, oozing over 1d3 nearby enemies. Those enemies become engaged with the ooze and stuck (save ends).
First failed save: The target is engulfed instead of stuck.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 160**
MD	14	

One of These Cubes is Not Like the Other

The cube shown here differs from the one in the core rulebook. Maybe they are two different species, or maybe the cube in the core book is in a stable configuration and the one shown here is in its mating or eating/growing/splitting season.

Gelatinous Cubahedron, aka Cube

There's a simplicity of design to the gelatinous cubahedron, a unity of form and function that is truly appreciated only by monstrous overlords.

Huge 5th level blocker [OOZE]
Initiative: +4

Shlup'n'schlorp +10 vs. PD—30 acid damage, and the cube engulfs the target (functions like a grab; see below) if it's smaller than the cube
Miss: The cube can make a *spasms* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Spasms +10 vs. AC (up to 2 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy)**—15 damage

Engulf and dissolve: Targets engulfed/grabbed (*13th Age* core book, page 172) by the cube take 30 acid damage at the start of the cube's turn but are not viable targets for additional attacks by the cube. Multiple targets can be held within the cube simultaneously.

Any engulfed creature that is also staggered must begin making last gasp saves (page 200 of core rules) or become paralyzed as the cube's toxins overwhelm it.

Instinctive actions: Gelatinous creatures have no brains, sometimes they just *do things*. When the escalation die is odd, instead of making an attack or moving, roll a d6 to see what the cubahedron does. If an option is not viable (you roll a 5 but there is no engulfed enemy), reroll until you get a valid option.

1. The cubahedron jiggles in place. Each nearby enemy takes 5 acid damage. Each creature engulfed by the cube takes a –4 penalty to its saves until the end of its next turn.
2. The cubahedron moves as a quick action. If the cube ends its move engaged with enemies, each of those enemies must roll a save; on a failure, the cubahedron grabs them (but they're not engulfed).
3. The cubahedron spits an engulfed creature into the air above it and makes a *shlup'n'schlorp* attack against that creature with a +5 attack bonus. Then the creature is engulfed again.
4. The cubahedron flattens itself slightly and crawls up a wall and possibly across the ceiling. The cube falls at the end of its turn. Each creature engulfed by the cube takes 30 damage, and it makes a *gel drop attack* against enemies below it.
   Gel drop +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—15 damage, and the cube engulfs the target if it's smaller than the cube
5. The cubahedron moves one creature engulfed by it to the surface. The target gains a +4 bonus to attempts to escape the cube, but each time the cube is targeted by an attack, the engulfed creature must roll a save; on a failure, it becomes the target of the attack instead.
6. The cubahedron spits out each enemy engulfed by it with great force in different directions; each of those creatures takes 50 damage.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 200**
MD	15	

Unstable Geometries

Gelatinous octahedrons and dodecahedrons are rare, partly because they tend to split and divide into smaller more stable forms. This is part of the life cycle of the gelatinous cube: they grow in size and gain complexity becoming octahedrons or even (if food is plentiful and nobody disturbs its eating) a dodecahedron, and when they are too unstable they split—multiplying.

Gelatinous Octahedron

These deadly oozes are hollow on the inside and contain a highly corrosive liquid.

Huge 6th level blocker [OOZE]
Initiative: +5

Shlup'n'schlorp +11 vs. PD—38 acid damage, and the cube engulfs the target (functions like a grab; see below) if it's smaller than the cube
Miss: The cube can make a *spasms* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Spasms +11 vs. AC (up to 2 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy)**—19 damage

Engulf and dissolve: Targets engulfed/grabbed (*13th Age* core book, page 172) by the cube take 38 acid damage at the start of the cube's turn but are not viable targets for additional attacks by the cube. Multiple targets can be held within the cube simultaneously.

Any engulfed creature that is also staggered must begin making last gasp saves (page 200 of core book) or become paralyzed as the cube's toxins overwhelm it.

Instinctive actions: Gelatinous creatures have no brains, sometimes they just *do things*. When the escalation die is odd, instead of making an attack or moving, roll a d8 to see what the octahedron does. If an option is not viable (you roll a 3 but there are no nearby targets), reroll until you get a valid option.

1. **C: Acid splash +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—8 ongoing acid damage
   Each failed save: Acid destroys one of the target's non-magical items. The target takes a cumulative –1 attack penalty until the end of the battle (boots fall apart, shield straps snap, etc.).
   Miss: 5 ongoing acid damage.
2. The octahedron grows an orifice that gushes out a liquid glue that floods the area. Each enemy engaged with the octahedron is stuck (hard save ends, 16+). Each nearby enemy not engaged with the octahedron is stuck (save ends). Each far away enemy is stuck (easy save ends, 6+). The glue has no effect on creatures who are flying or that have some way of avoiding it.
3. The octahedron squirts a slick slime that targets 1d3 nearby enemies. Until the end of the battle, each target must roll an easy save each time it moves; on a failure, it's hampered until the end of its next turn.

4. The octahedron makes a *fire gout* attack as it splashes out a gel that ignites in the air and sticks to skin and clothing.
   C: Fire gout +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—8 ongoing fire damage
   Each failed save: The ongoing damage for all enemies hit by the attack increases by 1.
5. The octahedron sweats acid. Each enemy engaged with the octahedron must roll a normal save; on a failure, it takes 40 acid damage. On a success it takes 20 acid damage.
6. **C: Acid jet +11 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—45 acid damage
   Miss: 8 ongoing acid damage.
7. **C: Acid geyser +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)**—30 acid damage, and the octahedron is propelled uncontrollably about the area, passing next to each of its enemies. Unlike normal, each enemy can make an opportunity attack against the ooze as it moves this way, but the ooze can make a *glomp* attack against those who do as a free action as it passes. (Tell the PCs that the ooze will get a counter-attack.)
   Glomp +9 vs. PD—10 acid damage, and the cube engulfs the target if it's smaller than the cube
8. The octahedron splits into two tetrahedrons, and each one can act this turn (roll a d4 for the *instinctive actions* of each one). Divide the octahedron's current hit points equally between the two new creatures.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 280**
MD	16	

Gelatinous Dodecahedron

These rolling oozes contain smaller oozes inside them, and each ooze in the colony functions like an acid- or fire-spewing organ in the greater mass.

Huge 7th level blocker [OOZE]
Initiative: +5

Shlup'n'schlorp +10 vs. PD—30 acid damage, and the dodecahedron engulfs the target (functions like a grab; see below) if it's smaller than the dodecahedron
Miss: The cube can make a *spasms* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Spasms +10 vs. AC (up to 2 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy)**—15 damage

Engulf and dissolve: Targets engulfed/grabbed (*13th Age* core book, page 172) by the cube take 30 acid damage at the start of the cube's turn but are not viable targets for additional attacks by the cube. Multiple targets can be held within the cube simultaneously.

Any engulfed creature that is also staggered must begin making last gasp saves (page 200 of core book) or become paralyzed as the cube's toxins overwhelm it.

Instinctive actions: Gelatinous creatures have no brains, sometimes they just *do things*. When the escalation die is odd, instead of making an attack or moving, roll a d12 to see what the dodecahedron does. If an option is not available (you roll a 1 but there are no nearby enemies), reroll until you get a valid option.

1. The dodecahedron makes a *squash* attack against 1d4 nearby enemies as it rolls and shlorps around the area. Any enemies already engulfed by the dodecahedron take 10 thunder damage.
   C: Squash +10 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)—20 damage, and the target is stunned (easy save ends, 6+)
2. The dodecahedron throws out whip-like tendrils and makes a *sudden orifice* attack against each enemy engaged with it. Then it pulls each nearby enemy next to it and engages that creature.
   Sudden orifice +12 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with it)—The dodecahedron engulfs the target if it's smaller than the dodecahedron
3. Hundreds of finger-size slimes slither out from the interior of the dodecahedron and begin worming their way across the bodies of each of its enemies in the battle. Until the end of the battle, when a non-ooze creature takes any damage besides ongoing acid damage, it also takes 10 acid damage.
4. The dodecahedron bounces and thrums. Each enemy engaged with it or engulfed by it must roll a save; on a failure, that enemy takes 30 thunder damage. On a success, it takes 15 thunder damage and pops free from the dodecahedron.
5. The dodecahedron hunkers down and produces acidic spikes. It gains a +4 bonus to all defenses until the end of the battle, and each enemy who makes a melee attack against it with a non-magical weapon must roll a save; on a failure the weapon dissolves. When a creature's weapon dissolves, that creature is hampered and weakened (save ends both). Magical weapons lose their bonuses to hit and damage until the end of the battle instead of being dissolved (but the owner is still hampered and weakened). They can be "restored" after the battle by taking a few minutes during a rest to re-attune them.
6. The dodecahedron moves, rolling around the battlefield, then makes a *shlup'n'schlorp* attack at the end of its movement with a +5 bonus. If the attack misses, instead of making a *spasms* attack the dodecahedron rolls about the area again and makes a second *shlup'n'schlorp* attack with a +10 bonus. If the second attack misses, it doesn't get a *spasms* attack and the dodecahedron's turn ends.
7. The dodecahedron makes a *spasms* attack. If it misses with either attack roll, after the attacks, it can make a *stretch and engulf* attack as a free action.
   C: Stretch and engulf +12 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—30 acid damage, and the dodecahedron engulfs the target if it's smaller than the dodecahedron
8. **C: Pseudopod slaps +10 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—25 thunder damage
   Natural odd hit: The target pops free from the dodecahedron and is knocked far away, and the ooze makes the attack again against a different nearby enemy as a free action.
   Natural even hit: The dodecahedron engulfs the target if it's smaller than the dodecahedron.
9. Each enemy engulfed by the dodecahedron takes 40 acid damage, and the dodecahedron heals 40 hp for each enemy it has engulfed.

10. The dodecahedron splits into an octahedron and a tetrahedron, and each one can act this turn (roll a d8 and d4 for the *instinctive actions* of each one). Divide the dodecahedron's current hit points into thirds, and give one third to the tetrahedron and two thirds to the octahedron.

11. The dodecahedron splits into three tetrahedrons, and each one can act this turn (roll a d4 for the *instinctive actions* of each one). Divide the dodecahedron's current hit points equally between the three new creatures.

12. The dodecahedron splits into two cubahedrons, and each one can act this turn (roll a d6 for the *instinctive actions* of each one). Divide the dodecahedron's current hit points equally between the two new creatures.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 550**
MD	16	

Building Battles

Gelahedrons don't ally with anyone or anything but themselves. But where there's one, there's often a lot more, especially in living dungeons that have breached. That doesn't mean others won't use the oozes against their enemies. Mad wizards, kobold trapsters, and even Imperial sewer workers might have a few of the creatures around.

Polyhedrons and the Icons

Archmage: The Archmage blames the Wizard King for the creation of oozes and slimes, but is silent on the subject of gelatinous cubes and other polyhedra. Opinions are divided whether gelahedrons are the Archmage's style.

Crusader: The Crusader finds uses for many monsters. More than one demon attempting to sneak back into First Triumph has run right into a covered trench and had its bones cleaned by gelatinous oozes. There is said to be a way in and out of First Triumph through the maze of trenches, a rumor the Crusader encourages as it leads to enemies and spies walking face-first into near-invisible gelatinous cubes.

Diabolist: Torture pets for her torture pits. There is nothing that makes her laugh so much as a prisoner attempting to get a key out of a gelatinous tetrahedron. Those who get the key and escape the pit she allows to leave—usually.

Dwarf King: When you live far underground disposing of waste can be a problem. Most deeper dwarven settlements keep a conical pit into which they can toss their trash and other undesirable substances to have them eaten by the oozes at the bottom. Cess-pit overflowing? Into the pit. Dead kobolds? Into the pit. Condemned prisoner? Into the pit! With all the tunnels that run through the dwarven kingdom, it's no wonder that some gelatinous cubes would eventually find their way into the wild through a crack in a wall.

Adventure Hooks

Crafts—The college of magical crafts is holding its yearly familiars contest. The wizard with the most unusual familiar wins prestige and a purse of money large enough to build a tower. Sped Fellowes, a gnome illusionist, thinks he can win if he can somehow obtain a gelatinous familiar. He is willing to split some of the prize money with the adventurers if they can bring him a "baby" gelatinous cube. His fellow wizards can't stand Sped Fellowes and have vowed to throw as many obstacles in the adventurer's path as possible.

Nyrolex and Kaltorth, thieves extraordinaire—These thieves from Shadow Port thought they had a cunning plan—dig a pit in a road, divert the tax collector's coach into the pit, and let the gelatinous cube they had lured into the pit dissolve the guards, tax collector, and coach. Once the cube was done and gone all that would be left would be a glittering pile of coins and some undigested belt buckles and nails. The plan worked, but when the ooze (now a dodecahedron) heaved itself out of the pit it took the coins with it. Kaltorth still has acid burns from wrangling the cube into the pit, and he doesn't want to face it now that it's bigger. Nyrolex offers the adventurers a 50/50 split if they kill the ooze for her. Unfortunately the ooze has slimed its way into an active dwarven mine. Worse, the tax collector had a magic item (now floating around inside the ooze) and the dwarves want it for themselves.

Route of Destruction—An Imperial enchanter has cast a spell on some gelatinous cubes and set them to clearing a straight path through the Wild Wood to build a road. Naturally the druids killed him. Unfortunately for everybody the cubes are not stopping and are multiplying. The Priestess is worried, because the cubes are pointed straight at Santa Cora and if they keep eating and multiplying by the time they leave the Wild Wood there will be hundreds, possibly thousands of them. Agents of the Priestess and the High Druid jointly approach the adventurers asking them to recover the wizard's research notes. The wizard's tower is on a tiny flying island, and the tower is surrounded by a transparent dome/wall of quivering gelatinous cubes.

Genie

The problem isn't that genies are arrogant, capricious, and vengeful. The problem is that those are their virtues.

Bound by Iconic Pacts

Thanks to ruling their own small pocket dimensions, djinni and efreeti think of themselves as rivals of the icons. That's delusional, but you don't want to be the one to call them on it.

According to icons such as the Archmage and Elf Queen, genies are allowed to operate outside of their home pocket-dimensions thanks to ancient pacts that effectively subordinate them to the will of the icons. Unlike the demons that would invade the world, genies are allowed into the world, but their access to the world levies a price of occasional servitude and an inability to attempt wholesale destruction.

Folktales about the genies' subordination to the icons are popular throughout the Empire. We've included two of them below, after the basic monster stats. It's a sign of the genies' pride that they don't resent such folktales. Apparently they'd rather be the subject of tall tales and myths than be ignored. It's also possible that folktales that make genies out to be somewhat foolish can lead mortals who aren't as powerful as the icons to make foolish mistakes of their own. Wholesale destruction of the world or the Empire isn't on the genies' agenda, but awesome acts of smaller-scale destruction and slaughter are what some genies live for.

Wishes

Djinni and efreeti don't grant wishes outright as many tales suggest. Instead, someone who slays a genie gains what amounts to a type of limited wish that may or may not be entirely in their control. For player characters, a wish is the equivalent of an extremely powerful icon relationship roll of 6 with an icon of the PC's choice, within the limits described in the Grant-a-wish abilities in the monster stats below. The limits of this advantage are deliberately vague; the point is to let the wish play out using your game's standard icon relationship usage rather than adding new layers of what-is-a-wish nitpickery.

When the wish is granted, it triggers the genies' original pact with the icons and the genie returns to its home pocket dimension instead of being slain.

Returning to the World

Different genies have different re-entry conditions. GMs should feel free to bring defeated genies back within days or months . . . or to specify specific rituals that are required for a genie to re-enter the world with conditions the PCs might be able to prevent. A genie can make a great recurring villain, growing more and more frustrated as the wishes it grants thwart its allies' long-term goals or make it harder for it to ensure that it always has an escape plan.

Of course, a djinn or efreet that is a recurring villain should have more and more nastier specials that coincide with each return. . . .

Djinn

The closest most people get to "making a wish" is wishing that the twelve-foot tall whirlwind giant in front of them will somehow decide not to kill them.

Large 9th level spoiler [GIANT]
Initiative: +15

Greatsword +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)—40 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: Increase the escalation die by 1 (cumulative), and until the end of the battle, the djinn adds the escalation die to its attacks.

C: Assault of the whirlwind +13 vs. PD (1d4 + 1 nearby creatures, including invisible creatures)—35 damage, and after the attack the djinn teleports to one of the targets and engages it
Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.
Miss: 10 damage.
Limited use: The djinn can only use this attack while it's not staggered.

Flight: Genies fly extremely well, but lumber, at best, when walking on the ground.

Grant-a-wish: A PC whose attack drops a djinn to 0 hp gains the equivalent of an extremely favorable roll of 6 with an icon relationship die with an icon of the PC's choice that the PC already has a positive or conflicted relationship with. Treat this advantage as if it came from a positive relationship. The GM is encouraged to treat this result with the utmost benevolence and compassion.

Nastier Specials
If you want a djinn to be even tougher, use one or more of these nastier specials depending on which icon or icons the djinn is presently working for. The abilities represent the innate magic of the genie being channeled through the influence of the icon.

Archmage or Priestess
Protection boon: While not staggered, the djinn gains *resist spell damage 16+* against all spells except those cast by a PC that has at least a one point icon relationship with the Archmage or Priestess.

Crusader
Spiky bits: When an enemy makes a melee attack against the djinn and misses, it takes 2d20 damage.

Diabolist
Demonic taint: The djinn gains a random demonic feature from the table on page 233.

Dwarf King
Unwelcome resonance: Whenever a nearby enemy attempts to trigger a magic item power, there's a 50% chance that the power fails. If it does, the item refuses to let its owner use that power until the end of the battle.

Elf Queen or the Three
Sorcerous reach: The djinn's *assault of the whirlwind* attack can also target far away enemies.

Emperor or Lich King
Aura of command: Twice per battle as a free action, the djinn can turn an ally's normal save into an easy save (6+), or an enemy's normal save into a hard save (16+).

High Druid or Prince of Shadows
Wind/Shadow form: While not staggered, the djinn has *resist melee damage 16+*.

Orc Lord
Frenzied: The djinn takes a –1 penalty to all defenses. While not staggered, its crit range expands by 3.

AC	**25**	
PD	22	**HP 350**
MD	21	

Efreet

It's customary to speak of the efreet as brutal and callous in comparison to the supposedly more urbane djinn, but it's not true. It's just that people are more afraid of being burned alive than torn limb from limb by screaming winds.

Large 10th level wrecker [GIANT]
Initiative: +15
Vulnerability: cold (only while staggered)

Blade of the perfect warrior +15 vs. AC (3 attacks)—35 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: Each nearby enemy takes 20 fire damage.

R: Jet of absolute conflagration +15 vs. PD (one random nearby conscious enemy)—110 fire damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: The target loses all fire resistance until the end of the battle and is hampered (save ends).

Flight: Efreet don't fly as well or as quickly as djinn, but they are able to get around okay.

Grant-a-wish: A PC whose attack drops an efreet to 0 hp gains the equivalent of an extremely favorable roll of 6 with an icon relationship die with an icon of the PC's choice that the PC already has a positive or conflicted relationship with. Treat this advantage as if it came from a positive relationship. The GM is encouraged to treat this result with the utmost benevolence and compassion.

Resist fire 18+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Nastier Specials
If you want an efreet to be even tougher, use one or more of these nastier specials depending on which icon or icons the efreet is presently working for. The abilities represent the innate magic of the efreet being channeled through the influence of the icon.

Archmage or Priestess
Reinforced aura/spirit: The efreet gains a +1 bonus to MD and has no vulnerability to cold while staggered.

Crusader
Spiky bits: When an enemy makes a melee attack against the efreet and misses, it takes 2d20 damage.

Diabolist
Demonic taint: The efreet gains a random demonic feature from the table on page 233.

Dwarf King or Lich King
Stone slumbers: When the escalation die is 4+ at the start of a round, reset the escalation value by rolling it.

Elf Queen or the Three
Energy transformation: The efreet can choose to deal lightning damage instead of fire damage with its attacks.

Emperor
Imperial mark: While not staggered, the efreet gains *resist damage 16+* against enemies that have a positive or conflicted relationship with the Emperor.

High Druid or Prince of Shadows
Wind/Shadow form: While not staggered, the efreet gains *resist melee damage 16+*.

Orc Lord
Frenzied: The efreet takes a –1 penalty to all defenses. While not staggered, its crit range expands by 3.

AC	**25**	
PD	24	**HP 420**
MD	23	

Building Battles

As mentioned in the icon relations notes, feel free to associate both djinni and efreeti freely with most any intelligent or easily cowed monster or NPC that might be working for an icon. Genies are the ultimate mercenaries—sadly for adventurers, they're being paid in magical access rather than coin and lootable assets.

Genies and the Icons

It's the peculiar nature of the djinni and efreeti that they may serve any of the icons, for a time, without truly feeling loyalty to any but their own kind. A specific genie is probably obligated to serve between zero and two icons any given season, and if possible, it will seek to serve different icons rather than maintaining an "allegiance." Ideally, of course, the genie will become obligated to icons that are enemies of each other, giving it justification to accomplish very little, but of course the icons are aware of such tricks and squash them when they can.

Djinni are encountered in the temporary service of any icon, with the possible exception of the Great Gold Wyrm, depending on whether you see the Wyrm as too proud to employ tainted agents. The Archmage, Elf Queen, Priestess, and the Three are most likely to employ djinni. The Orc Lord and the Lich King are least likely to work with djinni.

Efreeti are likewise encountered alone or in association with those serving most any of the icons, with the Emperor and Diabolist being the most likely to call upon an efreet.

At the GM's option, efreeti or djinni under obligation to an icon can end up helping the PCs. That's not a terrible use of a 5 rolled as an icon relationship roll in the epic tier—you'll receive help from the genie, but it will hate you for the abasement of being required to serve you and you'll have trouble with it later.

Genie Tales

The tales that follow are legends of how the genies came under the sway of the icons. They're not necessarily true. In fact, they're often obviously not entirely true, like the moment in the tale of the Emperor and the Efreet that suggests that the efreeti built Axis. For that matter, the story about the Archmage might not feel entirely right in your campaign: it *could* have originally been told about the Wizard King! Similar tales have been told by the followers of nearly all the icons. The Diabolist, for instance, is said to have used the creation of the Abyss as proof that she could create a better world for the efreeti than they could create for themselves (even though many magical reckonings suggest that the Abyss was an accidental side effect of a far different magic!).

Use these tales as stories told in a campaign by professional storytellers or to inspire other episodes by which an icon used a genie's excessive pride to bind it into service.

The Emperor and the Efreet

The Emperor once bet the Archmage that he could conquer any land in the world.

"What of the volcano of the efreeti?" the Archmage said. "That as well?"

"That as well," said the Emperor, so the two made a wager and the Emperor gathered his armies and marched on the volcano. He had only camped there a day when the sultan of the efreeti came forth from the volcano and threatened to consume the Emperor's armies in a flow of lava.

"We only wish to serve you and earn your grace," the Emperor said. "Allow us to dwell here and worship you with rubies and loops of gold from the mountains' mines."

The efreet sultan's greed got the better of him and he allowed the Imperials to remain. He descended into the volcanic rift and told his subjects of their good fortune. True to his word, the Emperor brought the efreeti a trove of treasures, and they basked in the heat of the magma floes and reveled in their wealth.

While the efreeti were occupied with their baubles, the Emperor summoned his dragons. Using dragon fire they fused the rift beneath the volcano's caldera, trapping the efreeti in the underworld with all their wealth.

"What have you done?" The efreet sultan cried from beneath the earth.

"Command your people to serve me," the Emperor said, "for only in bondage will you ever leave this mountain."

Grudgingly the sultan accepted the Emperor's terms, and the Archmage sealed the bargain with a powerful spell. And so the efreeti constructed the city of Axis and built the Empire's grandest city in the place that had once been their home. The Archmage paid the Emperor his due, and once again the Imperial vaults were stacked with gold.

The Archmage and the Djinni

The Archmage was the most powerful wizard in the world. With magic words he could conjure fiery meteors to ruin castle walls, his gaze could tame the fiercest dragon or charm the loveliest nymph, and he knew the secret names of the lightning bolts and could call on them to dance destruction from the heavens.

Yet there were genies whose power exceeded his own, for they could grant wishes with the simplest thought. The most powerful genies were the djinni that lived high in the overworld. So the Archmage uprooted his tower and piloted it through the skies to the City of Storms, where he presented himself before the djinn king, who called himself the Thunder King.

"I seek an allegiance, O king of the djinni," the Archmage said. "With our combined power, imagine the wonders we might achieve!"

But the king declined. "Such an allegiance is inequitable, for you are merely an Archmage and we the great djinni."

The Archmage stayed in the City of Storms, where he tried to impress the king by creating splendid vaulted pathways for the stars and meteor showers that created their own music, but the Thunder King hardly noticed. One day, the Archmage packed up his tower, stoked its flame, and left the City of Storms.

After a year, the Thunder King noticed the Archmage's absence. He wondered what greater marvel could have attracted the Archmage's attention that would cause him to leave the grandest city in all existence. So the Thunder King came down from the overworld and visited the Archmage in his tower. But when he arrived, the Archmage's mithril golem turned the king away, stating that the Archmage was in conference with the Elf Queen.

Another year passed, and the Thunder King came again to the Archmage's tower. But when he arrived, the Archmage's golem turned him away, for the Archmage was giving an audience to the efreet sultan.

A third year passed before the Thunder King descended again from the skies to visit the Archmage. Before the Archmage's golem could turn him away again, the djinn burst into the Archmage's chamber, where he interrupted a meeting between the Archmage and tiger spirits that melted away into the shadows at the king's entrance. "I shall not be denied!" said the Thunder King. "Not for the likes of elves or efreeti or tiger spirits. The power of the djinni is greater than all of these!"

The Archmage examined the king dubiously. "What proof have you of such a claim?"

"Name any impossible task, and I swear to you that the djinni shall accomplish it."

"There is nothing I desire from you," the Archmage said. "Return to your drafty city. Your hollow boasts exhaust my patience."

Furious, the Thunder King bellowed, "One does not dismiss the king of djinni! Name an impossible deed—name ten—name one-hundred or one-thousand, that all the world shall remember the power of the djinni for all the ages to come!"

"Very well," the Archmage said, and having secured the power of the greatest of all genies, he named his first impossible task.

A State of War?

Traditional sources portray djinni and efreeti as deadly enemies, or at best wicked rivals. This seems right to us, but we want you to be free to phrase the hostilities however you like in your campaign. Maybe the rivalry between djinni and efreeti is ancient history. Maybe the icons play the two factions off each other, challenging each to prove itself more powerful than the other while preventing outright war. Maybe the genies serve the icons until the ancient enemy appears, at which point servitude is forgotten, which is why the genies have never quite been able to extract themselves from their obligations. Or maybe there was a war and one side won. Insert your version here. . . .

Ghouls

"They kept us holed up in that temple for twenty-one days. Our supplies held, as did the barricades, for the most part. The toughest part was the noise. There were the usual moans of the dead, but that wasn't the sound that drove half of us mad. It was the ghouls eating their way through the dead. We heard them tear through every muscle and pull flesh from bone. They never stopped eating."

—Naravan Okain, battle captain

Eaters of Warm Flesh and Cold Bone

Ghouls are humanoid creatures with an unnatural hunger for the flesh of the dead, which is why people often name them "the hungry dead." Once regular people, there are two causes that are widely held to cause ghoul outbreaks. Being killed by a ghoul causes the victim to rise up as one. Eating the flesh of the dead is the other cause. Transforming into a ghoul elongates the teeth and causes the fingerbones to stretch into gory claws. Decay beyond the initial transformation slows as long as the ghoul gets a regular meal. During battle with living creatures, ghouls prefer to tear chunks of flesh out of their enemies to stuff in their mouths. Calling them messy eaters is an understatement.

The legendary hunger of ghouls knows few bounds. Stories of ghoul attacks talk about battlefields picked dry. If the flesh is completely consumed, ghouls will crack open the bones to suck out the marrow. Ghouls let loose in graveyards and crypts will dig up bodies to eat what they can. Their constant state of hunger causes them to fight furiously when encountered. Although they prefer dead flesh, they will attack the living. Ghouls would prefer to drive off interlopers, but if the intruding group is small enough, they will be happy to tear fresh meat off of anyone who wanders into their hunting grounds.

Ghasts are born from ghouls who, desperate from hunger, attack and eat other ghouls. The transformation to ghast distorts the original humanoid's features further, its flesh pulled taut across yellowed bone. Noses, ears, and all soft flesh is ripped or gnawed away. All that remains is thin sinew, leathery skin, and long sharp teeth. The ghoul kills because it eats. The ghast only kills; it has no other purpose. Being the lone survivor of a pack of ghouls hardens the ghast into something deadlier.

While ghouls act instinctively, ghasts are smarter predators. Something about the act of eating another ghoul tempers the burning hunger into a cold fury. Ghouls tear apart an enemy in battle, chewing hot flesh while tearing more. The ghast kills quickly, dragging its meal back to its lair. If ghouls are a pack of scavenging undead, ghasts are the more deliberate predator. They aren't easily lured into traps, and can't be scared away by fire or common tricks. Ghouls act on their mindless hunger. Ghasts fill their bellies with meat that hasn't begun to rot and concentrate on killing tantalizing meals instead of convenient ones.

Gravemeat

It was once a human being. Or a dwarf. Maybe a halfling. It would definitely be a ghoul now, except that it's missing a leg. Or an arm. Maybe part of its head. It can't function as a viable ghoul. But still, it hungers.

1st level mook [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +2
Vulnerability: holy

Dirtcaked claw +5 vs. AC—3 damage, or 6 damage if the target is vulnerable
Natural 18+: The gravemeat can make another *dirtcaked claw* attack as a free action, then it takes 1d6 damage from the exertion.

AC	**17**	
PD	12	**HP 5 (mook)**
MD	10	

Mook: Kill one gravemeat mook for every 5 damage you deal to the mob.

Ghoul Fleshripper

This creature has feasted well on the dead. Its fingers, gnawed to the bone, end in claw-like fingertips. Long teeth glisten with whatever fluids pass for saliva in its mouth.

4th level wrecker [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +9
Vulnerability: holy

Bony claws +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)—6 damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)
Critical hit: Until the target saves against the vulnerable effect, it also takes 2d6 ongoing damage each turn.

Infected bite: Any creature that is slain by a ghoul and not consumed will rise as a ghoul the next night.

AC	**19**	
PD	18	**HP 54**
MD	13	

"You ever get close to one and look in its eye? They're dead. These things don't see. They smell. Smells are what makes stomachs work, so they sense you by your scent. If you want to get past them without a scuffle, all you have to do is cover yourself in their scent. You smell like a ghoul, they ain't interested. If you can find it, cut off the tongue from a licklash. Squeeze the spit out like a bar rag into your helmet and then put the helmet on, though you'll likely have to buy new armor afterward. This won't work if it's ghasts. They'll eat anything."

—Montal Narves, ranger "prankster"

Ghoul Licklash

A long, ropy tongue extends from the distended jaw of the creature. The tongue sweeps along its body, like an animal grooming itself. The flicker of pleasure in its eyes reveals that it savors the taste of any flesh, even its own.

4th level blocker [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +8
Vulnerable: holy

Bloody claws +8 vs. AC—12 damage, and target is vulnerable (save ends)

C: Flesh-seeking tongue +8 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—8 damage
Natural even hit: The target pops free from each enemy it's engaged with and is pulled to the ghoul licklash, who engages it.
Natural odd hit: The target is vulnerable (save ends).
Critical hit: The licklash can make a *flesh-seeking tongue* attack against a different target as a free action.

Infected bite: Any creature that is slain by a ghoul and not consumed will rise as a ghoul the next night.

Tongue lash: Once per round when a nearby enemy makes a ranged attack, the ghoul licklash can make a *flesh-seeking tongue* attack against that enemy before the attack as a free action.

AC	**21**	
PD	17	**HP 48**
MD	13	

Ghoul Pusbuster

Its body is swollen with the natural juices of putrefaction. The creature keeps one twisted claw over its mouth, holding the vile, chunky liquid at bay.

4th level spoiler [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +7
Vulnerable: holy

Feeble claws +8 vs. AC—9 damage

C: Vomit comet +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10 ongoing damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends both)
Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).
Natural odd hit: The target is dazed (save ends).
Self-diminishing: The ghoul pusbuster takes 2d6 damage for each creature it targets with this attack.

AC	**19**	
PD	16	**HP 60**
MD	13	

Ghast

This one doesn't stumble like the others. It steps with a predator's grace. And then it suddenly leaps behind you and bites, and for some reason you can't turn your head to fight back. . . .

5th level wrecker [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +12

Finely honed claws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)
—8 damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

Paralyzing bite +11 vs. AC (one vulnerable enemy)
—12 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends)

C: Hungry howl +11 vs. MD (each nearby enemy)—
The target must choose one: 15 psychic damage; OR 5 psychic damage and the target is vulnerable (save ends)
Limited use: 1/battle.

AC	**22**	
PD	18	**HP 74**
MD	14	

Nastier Specials

Instead of a slow, poisonous bite, a more deadly bite can also make things challenging for adventurers. Each time a ghoul bites a character, that PC immediately loses a recovery. If they run out of recoveries before their next full heal-up, that character must start making last gasp saves at the start of each battle. If the character fails their fourth last gasp save this way, they turn into a ghoul.

Building Battles

The hungry dead are found with other undead creatures, though if there's not enough warm flesh around, the ghouls and ghasts will turn upon them in their hunger. Skeletons are the most common, since the hungry dead will gnaw on old bones last. Evil spellcasters and servants of the Lich King often keep the hungry dead as pets or guards, chaining them or locking them up until they are needed (or as a means of entertainment when it's time to feed some hapless prisoner to them). The creatures can also be found in packs trailing bloodthirsty warrior-type humanoids such as orc raiding parties, where they can feast upon the dead and dying after a battle.

> *"These devil dogs show up when they are least desired. The Adversaries often congregate in the places of the dead. The demons know the ghouls wait. Ghouls gang up on a single opponent to take it down then move to the next one. They are supposedly mindless and yet there is a method to their mayhem. Best to purge with fire and wait until the ashes smolder."*
>
> *—Vashanda, paladin sworn in His name*

Ghouls and the Icons

Dwarf King: Ghoul warrens are sadly common in the underworld. Rather than risk losing valuable soldiers to the claws and teeth of ghouls, the Dwarf King sends in a crew of elementalists to seal off the cavern. The elementalists bring the whole thing down in cases of rough caves or unbuilt caverns. In areas such as temples or crypts, they simply ward the area off to starve the creatures within. The Dwarf King doesn't believe there's a difference between ghouls and ghasts—the distinction was made up by opponents of his policies.

Emperor: Prisoners looking to lessen their sentences for crimes against the Empire often agree to take on marrowman duty. Marrowmen are sent down into the sewers, catacombs, and elaborate tombs of cities and towns to clean them of ghouls and ghasts. Such creatures feast in large population centers. For each ghoul skull brought back from an expedition, a month is removed from the sentence. For each ghast skull, a year is struck from the record. Marrowmen must make due with whatever arms and armor they find on the site. Guards rarely pursue anyone foolish enough to run for it within the underways. The ghouls usually get any runners, and the rare few that survive are clearly blessed by the gods.

Lich King: Ghouls are a crude but effective way to spread influence. Every town has a graveyard nearby. All it takes is one ghoul to start a nest and soon the populace will either flee or be turned. The icon has little use for these creatures beyond that, since ghoul hunger drives them to attack his own troops or turns them into ghasts. Solitary ghasts placed in isolated areas of his domain prove useful as scouts, using packs of ghouls much as a mortal noble uses dogs.

Orc Lord: Even the Orc Lord pities ghouls. Orcs have their own will. Ghouls and ghasts are mindless beasts, nothing more than frenzied maws atop humanoid bodies. It's best to put them down to keep their madness from spreading. Every once in a while, a shaman will suggest capturing a ghast to see if their transformation can be used to turn orcs into something worse, or to cure the disease. Those shamans usually end up "seeing the world"—the Orc Lord's lieutenants tear the shaman's head off and launch it into the distance via catapult.

Priestess: Ghouls are a problem the Priestess despises above most. Ghoul outbreaks are fast moving and hard to contain. Innocent people die and even more must bear the trauma of watching relatives, loved ones, and friends turn into beasts before their eyes. Disasters like these shake the faith in the gods, so stopping them as quickly as possible keeps followers on her good side. Legends say the Priestess—and, perhaps, those to whom she bequeaths the power in an emergency—has the power to lay hands upon a ghoul and restore it to its former life.

Dealing with a Ghoul Bite

The creation of ghouls is left deliberately vague. The bite of the animate dead turning a victim into one of their own makes for high drama, but can really bum out someone who has invested time and development into a character. Fighting off disease, even a cool one that turns people undead, isn't the kind of thing fantasy heroes do outside of a few scenes where the clerics heal and the fighters board up some windows. For those looking into the mystery (and wanting to make their players sweat after an encounter with ghouls), we offer some alternatives below.

Ghouls don't make other ghouls: The only way for someone to turn into a ghoul is cannibalism. They must willingly eat the flesh of a living, intelligent being. It may have to be the raw flesh of someone not yet buried. It may be flesh specially prepared in a half-ritual, half-recipe and served to a cult. Perhaps ghouls are consciously created by choice. It may be a desperate choice between starving on a drifting ship or dying, but it's still a choice. Once that choice is made, the hunger sets in and doesn't stop until the ghoul is killed or it becomes a ghast.

Ghoul bites can't turn creatures, but ghast bites can: This process is slow. A single bite won't do it. The only way to survive the process is to make it to a full heal-up. During the full heal-up, any character with medical knowledge or healing hands can take the necessary precautions to deal with the infection. Should a character die before they take a full heal-up, however, the infection takes over.

Terrible Places for Ghoul Outbreaks

The confines of a ship make a ghoul outbreak happen quickly. A ship out on the ocean has few places on it to hide from ghouls. Tales of black ships with ghast captains and ghoul crews ripple through the darkest hours of sailor taverns. Pirates are also rumored to keep a ghoul or two dragging in a cage behind the ship. Send the ghouls over first before boarding. A frightening tactic is sending a ship of ghouls into a port city and letting the outbreak weaken the city's defenses and morale.

Castles often offer solace from an outbreak in the countryside. Villagers unskilled in the art of war seek the protection of castle walls. But one infected town crier is all it takes for the walls to be a detriment instead of an advantage. A lord walks a fine line when it comes to the protection of a castle. Take in too many villagers and the risk of infection grows. Take in too few and the survivors may revolt due to perceived cruelty.

One of the common checks of health before putting a prisoner into a dungeon is for ghoul infection. Most wardens want to make sure his charges aren't killed before their time. But not everyone is so stringent. Prisoners are also looking for ways to get out. Risking tunneling past a ghoul warren may be a price to pay for freedom. A prisoner won't care about the ghouls getting back into the prison, since they'll be free and clear. If the prison is in a remote location, the other prisoners and the guards might be forced together to protect themselves while they wait for help. If it comes.

> *"Fighting these things is a waste of time. They usually manifest in an area where you can take advantage of the terrain to cut down on their superior numbers. Find a doorway or other area in the crypt and force them to come at you one at a time. If you have a useless member of your team, give them a bleeding but non-fatal wound and lock them in a coffin or other secure location. The ghouls will go crazy scrabbling for the fresh meat and you can sneak past or attack from behind."*
>
> *—Vaughn Bek, fighter*

The sick and the dying often find themselves taken to a temple. Clerics can heal and even those without access to magical abilities can offer comfort. A ghoul outbreak in a temple can overwhelm a temple with only one or two clerics. A ghoul rampage is also a good way to defile a temple and ruin the power of the healers within.

Names

The creatures can only manage bestial grunts and hungry howls. Even the smartest ghasts don't appear to recognize the names they had in life. Other names for ghouls include rage zombies, grave eaters, yorix, howlmouths, and deathteeth.

Adventure Hooks

A Ghoulish Cover-Up—A prestigious family is willing to pay handsomely to have its crypts cleaned from a ghoul infestation. Unfortunately, while the adventurers are prepared for the hungry dead, the member of the family using the ghouls to cover up a necromancy cabal is a bit of a shock.

Feeding the Hunger—An army or raiding party uses potions to enhance its soldiers. The potions increase stamina and speed. One of the main ingredients is ghoul ichor. Unfortunately, a soldier overdoses and turns himself into a ghast. Can the adventurers stop the outbreak before the army headquarters turns into a fort full of the ravaging dead?

Ghastly Demise?—The ghast rampaging through the countryside is an old friend. When the adventurers confront the creature, it somehow recognizes them and pauses. Is there a chance their old friend is still alive inside the beast? If there is a cure for ghouls, the adventurers will have something many icons will desire, and some will kill for.

The Curse of Eternal Hunger—The members of a noble family are ending up as ghouls and ghasts. Someone has an artifact that curses the living with the form of the hungry dead. Who is getting their revenge on the nobles with the artifact, and what did the nobility do to the owner of the artifact to anger them so?

The Worst Kind of Family Visit—A ghoul infestation sweeps through a town. The survivors ask the adventurers to track down the ghoul horde. They don't want their friends and family ravaging the countryside.

GOLEM

Lifeless materials given humanoid form and purpose, golems were created to fulfill the wishes of their masters. But no created thing is made without flaw, and over the ages many careless masters become the broken victims of their toys.

Near-Eternal Guardians

Golems are constructs—creatures carved or crafted from inanimate materials and then given limited sentience through magic. They are usually designed as guardians for important locations or people. Their magic can last a very long time, but some golems eventually break free from their original tasks, allowing them to be found in the strangest of places.

Here are two new golems: bronze and marble.

Bronze Golem

The golem's overly ornate construction hides severe design flaws. Fail to locate those flaws and its fists will drum on your armor and ring you like a bell.

Large 7th level blocker [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +11

Gong-like fists of bronze +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—20 damage
Natural even hit against a target in heavy armor: The target is dazed (save ends).
Natural odd hit against a target in light armor or no armor: The target takes 10 extra damage.
Miss: 4d6 damage.

Golem immunity: Non-organic golems are immune to effects. They can't be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage a golem, but that's about it.

Hidden flaw: An enemy who hits the bronze golem with a natural 18+ attack roll can roll a DC 25 skill check using Intelligence or Wisdom to notice the bronze golem's hidden flaw! On a success, until the end of the battle, the golem loses its damage resistance and becomes vulnerable to all attacks (against each enemy informed of the flaw).

marble golem

Resist damage 18+: When an attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Nastier Specials

Percussion resonance: When the escalation die reaches 3+, the bronze golem gains a bonus to its first *gong-like fists of bronze* attack roll each turn equal to the number of attacks made against it so far that turn. (Each turn is separate, not cumulative.)

Spiky: When an enemy engaged with the bronze golem misses it with a melee attack, that enemy takes 2d12 damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	21	**HP 190**
MD	17	

Marble Golem

There should be some satisfaction in knowing you have been pounded to death by a glorious work of art.

Large 9th level troop [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +10

Enormous maul +15 vs. AC—60 damage

Natural even hit or miss: The golem can make a *backswing* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Backswing +14 vs. PD**—40 damage

Golem immunity: Non-organic golems are immune to effects. They can't be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage a golem, but that's about it.

Special Virtues

Each marble golem is infused with *two* virtues—magical properties that relate to the emotion or feeling incorporated into the sculpture as its dominant theme. Choose two virtues from the list below, or for a unique marble golem, invent your own.

Awe (fear effect): While nearby the golem, enemies with 40 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

Beauty: The first time each enemy attacks the marble golem this battle, it must roll a normal save; on a failure, the attack takes a –6 penalty.

Courage: While staggered, the marble golem adds the escalation die to its attack rolls.

Endurance: When the marble golem rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack roll, it heals 1d10 hit points per point on the escalation die. (It was checking for damage and got distracted.)

Hatred: When an enemy is staggered by the marble golem's attack, that enemy takes 4d10 extra damage.

Patience: Each turn, the marble golem can use one standard action to gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn. If it does, it gains an extra standard action during its next turn.

Protection: When the marble golem rolls a natural 16+ with an attack, decrease the escalation die by 1.

Strength: The marble golem's melee attacks now deal half damage on a miss.

Nastier Specials

More virtues: Statues that capture even more themes make stronger marble golems. Add one or two more virtues to the golem.

AC	**25**	
PD	20	**HP 340**
MD	22	

Building Battles

Both bronze and marble golems are the perfect guardians for treasure vaults, doors or gates to secured locations, and spellcasters' stashes of magic items. They can also be used as the truly deadly part of a trap that separates the PCs physically as the golem emerges from a hiding spot, or that drops a single PC into a pit with a golem waiting to strike.

As part of a group of enemies, golems make a good melee interceptor guardian for a spellcaster. Orcs sometimes hammer out a bronze golem and then send it headfirst into tough enemies while they hang back making ranged attacks until the enemies get softened up some. And, of course, golems make good finishers when the PCs fight through a horde of mooks to reach a leader, only to have said leader activate the golem.

Bronze & Baroque

Unlike the clean lines of most other golems, bronze golems are embellished with engravings, riddled with odd holes, and possessed of purely decorative wings and spikes. Picture them as a combination of an Art Deco robot, Gaudi's Cathedral, and a low-rider with statues of the saints glued all over its chassis.

The hidden flaw of each bronze golem manifests as a structural weakness somewhere in the golem's frame or magical aura. It's likely that the design's crazy overelaborations help conceal the flaw. PCs who find ways of studying individual bronze golems carefully might be able to figure out the golem's flaw in advance—if your PCs are oriented that way, make the skill check ridiculously hard.

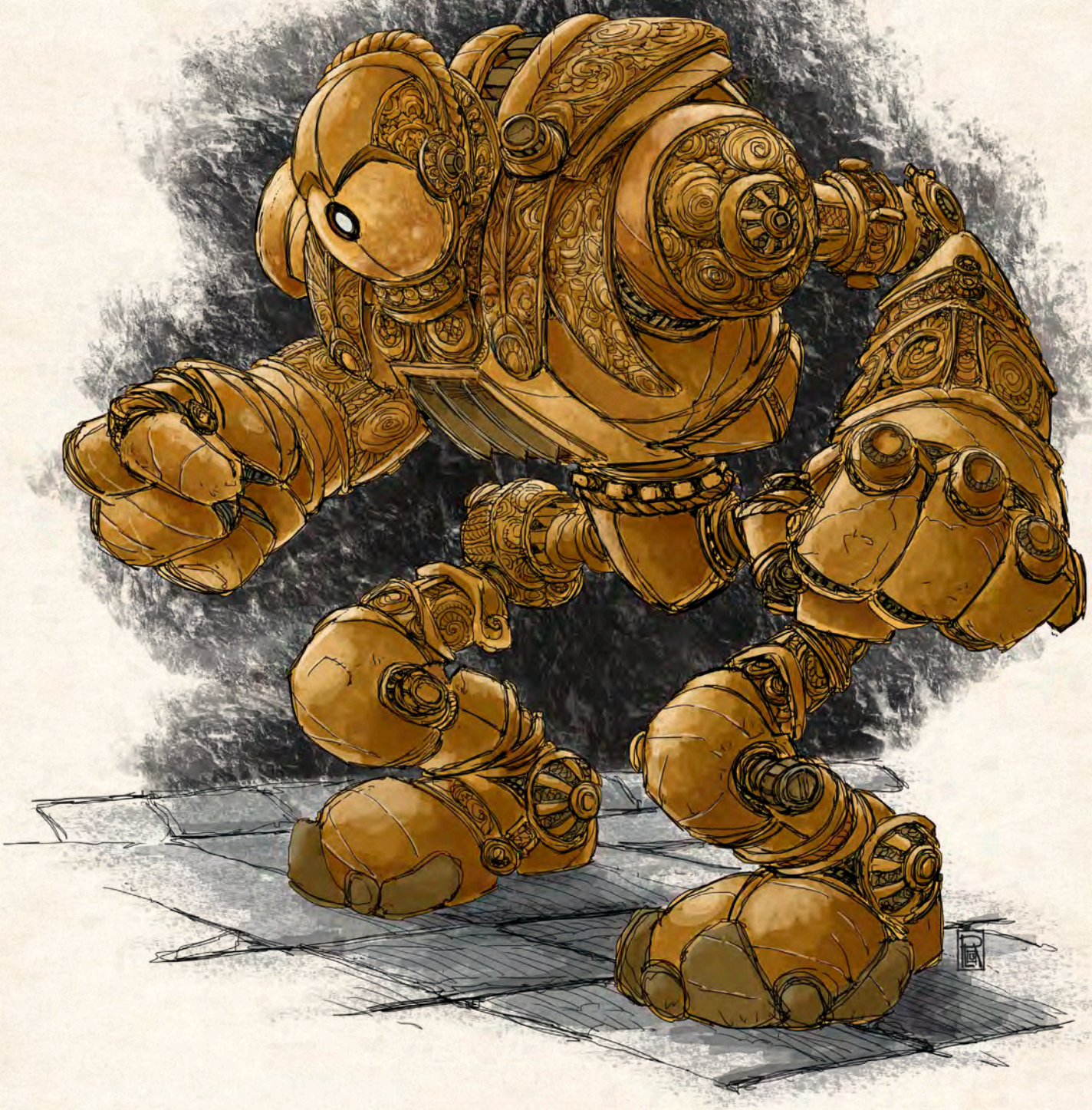
> *"While I'm sure I have uncovered the secret flaw of the bronze golem guarding the Fountain of Glory in the western under-citadel, the last two expeditions of caravan guards and mercenary captains failed to put my instructions into effect correctly."*
>
> ***—Mishra the wizard, writing to Horizon to request new bodyguards***

Art in Service

The first marble golems seem to have been created by the dwarves as guardians of deeply buried treasure vaults. Their creation became a bit of a scandal in certain dwarven circles, because most of the early marble golems were carved as fine statuesque females, but not as female dwarves. Dwarven women who cared about such things pointed out that the practice was in poor taste.

Simultaneously, many of the dwarven vault guardians were sculpted and imbued with the wrong virtues. Endurance, patience, and strength are fine virtues for a guardian who is meant to remain steadfast for decades or centuries. Awe and courage and hatred? Less ideal. The golems constructed with active virtues eventually shook off their guard programming and ventured out into the underworld seeking exercise.

What's true of the past doesn't have to be true of the present. You can spin the current marble golem situation anyway your campaign suggests.



Golems and the Icons

Most all the icons make some use of golems. The bronze and marble variants are somewhat rarer than the familiar golems in the *13th Age* core book.

It's possible that the Archmage, Elf Queen, and Priestess use them the most, and the Lich King's tastes in statuary might easily make room for golems with virtues such as awe, hatred, and patience.

Archmage: The Archmage has enough problems with hidden flaws, and therefore avoids relying on bronze golems. But marble golems suit both his purposes and decorating sense.

Crusader: Demons rarely manage to capitalize on the bronze golem's flaws. The Crusader enjoys hanging torture implements from the spiky armor bits of his bronze golem guardians for easy access.

Elf Queen: It pleases her to make better use of a tool than the dwarves. The high elves and the dark elves indulge the Queen's fancy by financing construction of marble golems.

Orc Lord: Dozens of orcs pounding bronze swords together in a dark ritual suffices to construct a bronze golem or four. No one will ever mistake an orc-hammered golem for a "normal" golem, but their capabilities are the same as usual, and they're always equipped with the *spiky* nastier special ability.

Priestess: Bronze and marble golems often guard temples and their priests. Bronze golems are out of favor in the Cathedral, where it's suspected that the design's hidden flaws mask control problems that are likely to be exploited by subtle magicians.

Adventure Hooks

Bronze golems are rough and ready and can be encountered in all manner of dire circumstances. Marble golems require someone, at some point, to have given a thought to beauty in their creation, but if a taste for beauty was enough to guarantee good intentions, there'd be a lot less treasure belonging to homicidal evil monsters to loot.

> *"Can't bleed 'em, can't spook 'em, can't reason, bribe, or blackmail 'em. Can't poison 'em, can't catch 'em sleeping, can't lie to them. I hate golems."*
>
> *—Siraad, master burglar*

Bait and Golem—The treasure map and clues to an extremely rich hoard the PCs have been finding? They're part of long-term plan by an ancient dwarven marble golem guardian that seeks to obey the letter of its guardian programming by defending its vault against all invaders . . . while simultaneously getting to exercise its virtues by inviting enemies and adventurers to come and try to loot its stuff.

Hidden Bronze Flaws—A dozen bronze golems protect a location the PCs need to reach. Tackling them head-on would be suicidal, but the PCs receive advice that these golems are even more vulnerable than others to their hidden flaws, which is part of the reason there are so many of them stacked as defense. The adventure starts as detective work, researching the golem's hidden flaws by tracking down their makers, by finding people who have survived battles against them, and by making powerful magical divinations. (And then, when the caper is finally on, the PCs learn the hard way that two of the bronze golems have been swapped out for a clay one and a stone one.)

Sunken Golems?—Somewhere in the Midland Sea, reached via a sequence of events that makes sense in your campaign, the PCs discover what appears to be a sunken statue factory. Some of the statuary are human-sized, some much larger. Is it just a marble factory, sunken somehow in an earlier cataclysm? Or a medusa's disposal zone? Or a storage zone for decommissioned marble golems waiting for the signal to rise? Or a mix of all three?

HAG

Legends say that the first hags were wise-women who traded their souls for the power to cure the sick and see the future. As the hags' bodies twisted around the holes where their souls had been, they realized they had made a mistake, because in the future that was now as clear to them as a scream at midnight, they were the ones causing plagues and destruction.

Many Types of Hags, All Bad

They appear to be shrunken elderly women, but the power in their limbs and their iron-black claws and teeth refute any possible appearance of being benign. They are feared as eaters of men, and are the subject of nightmares and the object of quests to vanquish the evil they spread.

Some are born as hags, the daughters and granddaughters of hags. Others are women who trade their mortality and morality for power. Born hags start their lives monstrous in soul and body, but those who slowly become hags are truly tragic figures. Many hags look almost human though wizened and ugly, others look like the traditional wicked-witch figure complete with green or blue skin and hooked nose. A few hags are bizarre monstrosities that reflect the worst aspects of the region they live in, taking on frog-like legs if they live in a swamp or becoming giant rock-skinned mountain hags.

All hags share commonalities: blackened iron nails and teeth, horrid strength, twisted magical abilities, and a desire to eat the flesh of sentient beings and spread evil and misery. Each hag is also unique in other ways, so presented here is a standard hag with a grab-bag of possible additional abilities. We recommend using two special abilities per hag. Each option also includes an advantageous trait for the hag. The hag abilities are triggered by their attacks as a free action.

Many of these abilities are more than just combat oriented; they are magical powers that could have substantial impact on the world and the campaign's storylines. Given that each hag also has a unique death curse to deliver upon the one who slays it, hags have stronger story connections than many other monsters.

When it suits the story, the GM could decide that a particular hag is a double-strength monster, or is secretly large-size and only pretending to be normal-sized. A tougher hag has a greater chance to bend the story in her wrong direction.

Hag Covens

Hags have cultists and acolytes and fearful villagers doing their bidding, are usually members of a coven of equally powerful hags, and sometimes have alliances with orcs or other monsters. They might even have dire animal familiars or pets to do their bidding. They're always at the center of a web of evil.

Hag

Twisted. Wizened. Evil. Hags are not women, though they mock the shape of such.

6th level spoiler [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +10

Iron claws +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—9 damage
Natural 14+: The hag triggers one *hag ability* as a free action.
Natural 18+: The hag triggers two *hag abilities* as a free action (can't be the same ability twice).

R: Evil eye +10 vs. MD—Ongoing 12 damage (hard save ends, 16+)
Natural 16+: The attack roll also targets a second different enemy of the hag's choice.
Natural 18+: As above, and the attack roll also targets a third different enemy of the hag's choice.

Death curse: Each hag can lay a curse upon the one who ends its horrible life. After dropping to 0 hit points, a hag always lingers long enough to pronounce the words of the curse. (See possible curse options below.)

Delusionist: All hags have the ability to twist the perceptions of others. If the hag has a short time to prepare, it can hide a small hut, disguise a volunteer or captive as a monster, disguise itself as a harmless peasant woman, etc. A DC 30 skill check is required to overcome the delusion and see the truth of it (if a player gives a reason for not trusting what their character sees; perhaps add subtle clues toward that end). The magic fades as soon as the hag enters combat.

Fear: While engaged with this creature, enemies with 30 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 108 (see *death curse*)**
MD	15	

Hag Abilities: Choose TWO

Annis illusions: The slender daughters of Black Annis are adept at illusion, able to craft mind-affecting hexes in seconds rather than hours. The daughters of Annis are taller and straighter-backed than most other hags, and they can rapidly change their appearance to resemble exceptionally tall humanoids, or even imitate a tree. They enjoy skinning their victims and wearing the skins as a skirt, leaving the corpses impaled high up on trees for later collection as food once they start to rot.

The hag gains a +5 bonus to initiative checks due to being not quite where she seems.

Hag ability: As a distraction, the hag creates an illusion of her doing one thing, when she is in fact setting a trap. The hag throws out a bear-trap or other impediment and one nearby enemy becomes stuck (save ends). While stuck this way, the target takes 6 damage at the start of each of its turns.

Annis skin: The hag can grow a second skin, disguising herself as a beautiful woman. She likes to seduce victims and lure them to her lair to kill them. *On the hag's first round of combat each battle, she gains a +2 attack bonus due to her victims being shocked as she bursts out of her false outer skin.*

Hag ability: The hag coughs up a glob of liquid pseudo-flesh that globs onto a nearby enemy (no attack roll). The glob solidifies causing an effect of the hag's choice: the target is stuck (save ends); OR the target is unable to cast spells during its next turn (the pseudo-flesh covers their mouth and face).

Blood pact: The hag is able to create mystical pacts between creatures, sanctifying alliances between monsters. The hag generally extracts a price from such monsters, such as periods of servitude/slavery that they owe her. *Each creature allied to the hag through a pact gains a +2 bonus with their first attack each battle if the hag is present.*

Hag ability: The hag spits blood in the face of the target and makes a command. The target must roll an immediate save; on a failure, as a free action it makes basic attack against an ally or against itself (target's choice).

Breath stealing: The hag enjoys killing sleeping victims by using stealth or subterfuge to get close to them and stealing their breath as they sleep. *The hag starts combat with 10 temporary hit points.*

Hag ability: The hag steals a recovery from the target and heals 20 hp.

Death shriek: The hag's shrieks and cackling laughter carry far and wide, traveling on the wind for miles and seeming to come from nowhere and everywhere. The hag enjoys using her blood-curdling calls to unsettle entire villages and drive trade away from towns. *When a melee attack hits the hag, she lets out a shriek as a free action and the attacker takes 2d4 thunder damage.*

Hag ability: The hag begins to shriek, and each enemy in the battle takes a –4 attack penalty with spells until the start of her next turn.

Dusk walk: The hag can physically walk through the land of dreams, her footsteps giving nightmares to dreamers and causing animals to scream as she invisibly passes. *Once per day the hag can implant a suggestion in the mind of a target sleeping within a day's travel of her. Hags use these suggestions to sow discord and suffering. The hag rolls an attack: **+10 vs. MD**; on a hit, she implants a suggestion in the target that they must obey when a condition she chooses is met (*"When you see the mayor, loudly insult his ugly wife." "When you pass the village smith, throw dung at him." "At sunset walk into the deep swamp without a lantern."*) Suggested actions can't cause direct harm (the target can't be forced to fight another or harm themselves), can be no longer than 12 words, and affects the target for a week or until triggered. (GM, keep the roll hidden.)*

Hag ability: The hag becomes immaterial, pops free from all enemies engaged with her, and enters the land of dreams, re-appearing next to any nearby conscious creature (or a nearby or far away creature that is unconscious). The hag then makes the following attack: **C: +10 vs. MD (each nearby unconscious enemy)**—The hag implants a suggestion in the target that they must obey when they become conscious (usually "When you awake, flee this fight and discard your equipment.") Suggested actions can't cause direct harm. The round after the target acts on the implanted suggestion it can start rolling normal saves to throw off the effect.

Fateful visions: The hag has sporadic fits in which she shudders and becomes unresponsive. During these fits she perceives the future, though only in fragments. Because of this, the hag is sought out by those who would know the future, giving the hag a steady supply of victims. Some she kills and eats, and some she sends on their way with a prophecy and advice that seems good but will lead to widespread misery. *The hag uses a +2 magical weapon traded to her for her services (she gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage with melee attacks).*

Hag ability: The hag has seen this fight in a vision. Her crit range expands by 2 until the end of the battle. Each increase is cumulative.

Foul-touched: The hag is truly horrifying. Swamp-dwelling hags have fish gills and bug-like eyes (and can probably breathe underwater and swim like a frog). Mountain hags have skin studded with rocks. Desert hags look desiccated with sand-like flesh. Winter hags have icicles hanging from their fingers and empty eye sockets. *Just looking at the hag's true form causes mental anguish. When an enemy is battling the hag, at the start of each of its turns, it takes 2d6 psychic damage from the horror of the hag's visage unless it takes precautions to avoid directly glancing at her terrible face (mirror, blindfold, etc., which might cause attack penalties).*

Hag ability: The hag chooses a nearby enemy and glares at it. That target must roll an immediate save; on a failure, the target is stricken blind by her ugliness. While blinded this way, the target is hampered, weakened, and can't make ranged attacks. The target can end the effect by splashing liquid into its eyes or using a similar act to clear the ugly out as a standard action.

Song of dreams: The hag's soft crooning lulls her victims to sleep, making them easier to attack. In hag-inhabited lands, the sound of lullabies on the wind is a thing to fear. *Enemies take a –4 penalty to their initiative rolls in battles with the hag.*

Hag ability: The hag begins to sing and the two enemies closest to her (even if far away) must roll an immediate save; on a failure, the target is dazed (save ends). If the dazed target fails its first save, instead it's weakened (save ends). If the weakened target fails its second save, instead it's helpless (save ends).

Thief of mist: The hag can transform into mist, creeping through gaps and into houses. Unexplained deaths and little tragedies plague the area she has chosen as a home. Villages near hags with this ability are sad places indeed. *The hag ignores opportunity attacks and can't be intercepted while moving.*

Hag ability: The hag becomes a mist until the start of her next turn. While a mist, only spells cast with a +3 implement and attacks using a +3 magical weapon can harm her. (Some special story item might also allow attacks to hit if no PC has a +3 item.)

Twist the path: The hag has the ability to muddle the minds of others, causing travelers to wander into quicksand or get lost in dark forests. *Once per day the hag can enspell an area to attract visitors, causing those traveling nearby to get lost and wander to that location. Alternately, the hag can cause the location to repel visitors. Finding the correct path to that location requires a DC 20 check if it is a familiar place, a DC 25 check if the travelers only have a map or guide, or a DC 30 check if the travelers are unfamiliar with the area.*

Hag ability: The target is also confused (easy save ends, 6+).

Weakening touch: The hag's touch causes plants to wither, animals to sicken, and people to weaken and become ill. The hag enjoys creeping about at night ruining crops and killing livestock—dooming entire villages to slow starvation. *Each enemy fighting the hag must roll a normal save at the start of the battle; on a failure, that creature starts the battle weakened (easy save ends, 6+).*

Hag ability: The target is dazed (save ends). If the dazed target fails its first save, instead it's weakened (save ends). When the target saves against this effect, it takes a –2 attack penalty until the end of its next turn.

Winter breath: The hag's presence brings snow and ice to the region, freezing solid the soil of the surrounding land. *The hag's attacks deal cold damage.*

Hag ability: The target takes 6 ongoing cold damage.

Death Curses: Choose ONE

When a hag dies she curses the one who killed her. The only known way to remove the curse is to seek the aid of another hag, though there may be some ways to end such a curse that are not readily known.

"Skull features foul and rotten, your old face slips away forgotten!"
"Invade and rob my little home? You shall smell of rotting gnome!"
"Adventurer going where you please, now eats only stinging bees!"
"Every night when you sleep, you become a shaggy sheep!"
"You have come here me to kill, from here out good food makes you ill!"
"Righteous hero full of might, no more shalt know left from right!"
"You seek treasure to have and hold, slippery fingers when you grasp gold!"
"You should have left me whole and alive, for now you can't count above five!"
"For me mercy you cannot feel? Now you smell and taste of veal!"
"You killed me in my own domain, from now on none shall remember your name!"
"Squinty, pig nose, fishy jaw—cursed to be always chafed raw!"

Interpret each curse as you wish. A good curse makes life horribly weird for a character, but isn't something that debilitates them. If you prefer to make up your own curses, avoid ones that blind, deafen, cripple, or mute characters. Odd habits, ugly features, unusual smells, strange and disgusting diets—all these are good. They should make the character and the story more interesting.

Building Battles

Thanks to their ability to delude those around them, hags can be allied with almost anyone, even people the PCs consider allies. Of course, the classic hag in a forest or swamp might have allies that are lizardmen, goblins, giants, or beasts. Shadow dragons and hags sometimes work together to acquire new nightmares from their victims. Hags are also known to summon and consort with demons, or have half-demon offspring that combine the worst abilities of both. Hags make excellent mastermind villains who are hidden behind layers of deception and intermediaries, and are often someone the PCs believe to be on their side.

Hags and the Icons

Most of the icons will either have nothing to do with hags, or actively hunt them. Hags are not powerful enough to be a pawn of any individual icon, and are uncontrollable enough to be a problem when they set up their lair in an area of interest to a powerful figure. Hags often cluster together in covens of three or more and attract cultists and acolytes to them.

Archmage: The Archmage often places a bounty on a specific hag; they are too small of a problem for him to deal with directly but he doesn't like to have them plotting and running around freely. Their death-curses are something he'd like to study, but attempting to capture one alive inevitably results in dead wizards with their skins fluttering from trees like flags.

Diabolist: Only the Diabolist enjoys the presence of hags, finding their spreading of misery and chaos amusing. Compared to her plans for the world, their petty provincial evils are nothing, though she appreciates the individualized and artisanal nature of the tragedies they inflict.

Elf Queen: The ruler of the elves hates hags with a passion, and they hate her back.

Lich King: Hags are not well-liked by the Lich King, mostly due to mortals fearing hags more than they fear his undead. There are rumors of bad blood from his time as the Wizard King, some past alliance that went bad toward the end of his reign of terror.

Orc Lord: Hags and orcs get on just fine, and hags often give grisly magical items to the orcs in exchange for favors.

Prince of Shadows: The master (or mistress?) of intrigue doesn't employ any hags, probably. Then again maybe the Prince of Shadows is a hag. Who can say for sure? If anybody is able to manipulate the proud and quick-to-anger hags it would be the Prince.

The Three: The Blue in Drakkenhall tolerates hags, though she is careful about which of them is allowed into her city. Hags are a bit too proud for the Red or Black to control through threats or flattery, and their death-curses can be annoying, but they do think that hags are tasty.

Names

Hags typically have the names they carried as village wise-women, or names passed down from hag forebears. Black Annis is the most powerful hag, though her rival is the most widely known due to her walking chicken-legged hut. Possible hag names are Red Tockley, Gamma Bevis, Granny Hlock, Old Mother Kinderly, Lady Slender, The White Woman, and Great Grandma Frannie. Anything that small children might call a revered village elder-woman gains a sinister edge where hags are involved. Most villagers don't even say their names out loud, simply referring to the hag as "Her . . ." as they nod to the dark woods or deep swamp in which the hag is said to live.

Things Hags Carry

Ragged clothing. Rings, earrings, gaudy jewels—they use gold to lure the unwary into danger. Carved bones, gnawed bones, bones decorated with jewels, bone flutes. Their victims' skin, worn as a skirt. Meaty treats for their pets. And, of course, iron cauldrons.

Adventure Hooks

Something Wicked—A hag has used her powers of dream-shaping and seductive illusions to become the ruler of an area, but her magic has ruined the crops. The villagers are convinced that killing hags is the solution to their woes, but they don't know that their local ruler is the hag. The secret servants of the hag have disguised themselves as witch hunters and are going from village to village holding trials and burning innocent old crones. Can the adventurers uncover the truth of the matter before more innocents die?

Toil and Trouble—Three hags have formed a coven (the Red Sisters) and are influencing local politics for the pleasure of watching the locals fall apart. Scheming nobles are murdering each other, ghosts haunt local keeps, and tyranny, betrayal, and assassination are the order of the day. A rival coven of hags (The Daughters of Hexate) has a young apprentice that they want to put into a position of power. Thanks to their magic, the apprentice looks like the most beautiful woman in the world and has been sent to a local ball to seduce and marry the current ruler (who is under the dream-shaping control of The Red Sisters). The adventurers are stuck in the middle of this shadowy struggle between covens, trying to sort friend from foe.

"The peasant magic of hags is unsophisticated yet troublesome. One wonders what dark force they pledge to in order to gain their powers."

—Shiboleth of the Red Order

Haunted Skull

A ghost that haunts its own skull.

Halfway Between Worlds

Haunted skulls are physical anchors for ghosts. Rather than being an animate physical undead like a zombie or skeleton or an incorporeal undead like a ghost, haunted skulls are immaterial spirits that are trapped inside the skulls of their own dead bodies. This state of being is distressing for the spirit. Most haunted skulls are creatures of pure pain-driven instinct, but some come to terms with being between states of existence and are coherent and capable of complex thought.

Watch Skull

Glittering glass in the eye sockets and runes carved on the brow show that somebody went to a great deal of effort ensure that a ghost would haunt this undead guardian. One wonders if the runes were carved before, after, or during death.

1st level troop [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +9

C: Screech +8 vs. MD (1d3 random nearby creatures)—4 psychic damage
Natural 16+: The target is stuck (save ends).
Natural roll is equal to or lower than the escalation die: 1d3 nearby enemies hear the alarm and join the battle. The creatures attracted by the constant screeching are (usually) level 1 mooks of a type that would be appropriate for the skull's location.

Immobile: The skull can't hop, jump, roll, or fly. It can't even move its jaw.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

Nastier Specials
Allies: Creatures that have been mystically "keyed" to the skull aren't affected by its *screech* attack.

Gem eyes: The skull can sense the unseen and things from beyond the world. A wizard using a *blur* spell, a rogue shadow walking, and other similar abilities offer no protection from the skull and its *screech* attack. (If the PCs come up with a plausible tactic to bypass the skull, give the skull a normal save to detect them.)

Move-triggered: When an enemy near the skull uses a move action to move, the skull can make a *screech* attack against that creature as a free action that interrupts the move. The skull can use this ability twice per round. Shadow walking, teleporting, and other non-standard modes of movement will trigger the *screech* attack.

AC	**16**	
PD	11	**HP 20**
MD	16	

Slime-Skull

The slime killed the creature, the creature's ghost killed the slime, and now the two are trapped together—bound to the skull. The roughly humanoid blob of slime slurps morosely along with the skull bobbing around inside it. Some slime-skulls work at getting their mucus-coated parts to simulate a voice box, so that they can whine and threaten and curse out loud, but their rants usually cut out mid slurp.

3rd level spoiler [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +5

Slam +10 vs. AC—7 damage

C: Grasping slime tendrils +10 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—7 acid damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 3 extra acid damage and is stuck (hard save ends, 16+).

Acidic: When a creature is engaged with the slime-skull or stuck from its *grasping slime tendrils* attack at the start of its turn, it takes 3 acid damage.

Slimy blastback: When an enemy engaged with the slime-skull hits it with a melee attack, the slime-skull fires a blast of acidic slime back at that creature, which takes 1d4 acid damage.

Slow: This creature is slow. It only moves when the escalation die is odd or 6+.

Wall-crawler: A slime-skull can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

Nastier Specials
Breeder: If the slime-skull kills a creature, it takes that creature's head as a standard action and attempts to escape (it can squeeze through gaps as small as the skull). The slain creature can't be resurrected until its skull is recovered because its spirit is now trapped within the skull. If the PCs don't track down the slime-skull before their next full heal-up (or within a day), the stolen skull will transform into another slime-skull. Attempts to resurrect the creature become much more difficult, perhaps even impossible, at that point.

AC	**18**	
PD	10	**HP 36**
MD	18	

Jest Bones

Some spirits don't get to rest easy, curses are never pretty things, and dread necromancers like a good laugh as much as the next person. Some might say they enjoy laughing more than normal people, and at the darkest possible jokes.

4th level spoiler [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +8

C: Puns +11 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)—5 psychic damage, plus 1d6 ongoing psychic damage if the GM makes a horrible pun while rolling the attacks
Bad puns: Creatures that can't hear or that have attempted to reduce their hearing are only affected by a jest bones' *puns* attack if the natural roll is odd.

Limited flight: The haunted skull can glide and hover, always within seven or eight feet of the ground. It also performs barrel rolls.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

AC	**19**	
PD	11	**HP 41**
MD	19	

Screaming Skull

If you listen closely to a screaming skull, you might learn a great deal about the people its spirit hated when it was alive. Of course, listening closely to a screaming skull is a good way of washing your ears out with blood.

4th level troop [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +7

C: Treacherous scream +11 vs. MD (up to 2 nearby or far away enemies)—6 psychic damage, and the target takes 2d6 psychic damage the first time it succeeds at a save before the end of its next turn.

Limited flight: The haunted skull can glide and hover, always within seven or eight feet of the ground.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

AC 19
PD 11 **HP 45**
MD 19

Flaming Skull

Beings whose great passions anchor them to their mortal remains can become flaming skulls. Evil skulls gravitate toward the service of other undead beings or evil necromancers.

5th level caster [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +10
Vulnerability: holy OR negative energy, depending on the skull

R: Burning gaze +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies or one far away enemy)—10 fire damage
First natural even hit each battle: The target is confused (easy save ends, 6+).

C: Smoldering flames +11 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—14 fire damage, and each time the target fails a save this battle, it bursts into flames and takes 5 ongoing fire damage

Limited flight: The haunted skull can glide and hover, always within seven or eight feet of the ground.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

Resist fire 16+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 20
PD 12 **HP 54**
MD 20

"Grimalkin, next time let's rob a tomb that doesn't have a skull in it." "Fiferd, tombs have skulls. That's what makes them tombs."
—Fiferd and Grimalkin, thieves extraordinaire

Black Skull

Before becoming undead the black skulls were the generals of the Wizard King's armies and the members of his court. Some black skulls still serve the Lich King, while others are free agents and travel the empire incognito, staying with innkeepers who can be bought off with grave gold and overseeing their many interests. The black skulls are urbane conversationalists, and their rich, cultured voices sound like honey made from the dark flowers that grow only where thousands have been massacred.

8th level caster [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +13

R: Telekinetic grasp +15 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—28 force damage
Natural even hit: The target is stuck (save ends).
Telekinetic crush: When the escalation die is even, one enemy of the skull's choice that is stuck from its *telekinetic grasp* takes 18 force damage at the start of the skull's turn. When the escalation die is odd, one such stuck enemy of its choice is hampered (save ends).

Limited flight: The haunted skull glides and hovers, always within seven or eight feet of the ground. If the skull is incognito, its empty clothing moves around beneath it, held in the shape of a person by telekinesis and it stays closer to the ground to appear normal.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

AC 23
PD 15 **HP 110**
MD 23

Skull of the Beast

A cow skull floats above a headless ogre body. It'd be stupid if it wasn't killing you.

Large 9th level wrecker [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +10

Huge club +17 vs. AC—50 damage
Miss: 18 thunder damage to 1d3 nearby enemies (the beast screams and bellows in disappointment).

C: Baleful gaze +15 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—25 negative energy damage
Natural odd hit: The target is stuck (save ends) from looking into the void within it.
Limited use: 1/battle.

Fear: While engaged with this creature, enemies that have 60 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

AC 21
PD 13 **HP 400**
MD 21

"A ghost that haunts its own skull. If we'd known that was a thing we would have never disturbed the old graves. And maybe I wouldn't have had to dig so many graves for my friends."
—Lenwe the Archer

Building Battles

Any sort of intelligent humanoids can use watch skulls to guard their lairs or homes. The skulls are also often found in graveyards and old battlegrounds. Slime-skulls slurp around sewers and dungeons and are common in the underworld, especially at old battlegrounds where dwarves and drow fought. Where there's one skull, there's usually more. Jest bones are almost always kept as pets by liches and vampires, or sometimes by necromancers and other servants of the Lich King as an "inside joke." Flaming skulls go where they please, though they seem to like hot, fiery environments most—the bowels of a fire giant castle, for example. Black skulls can be found anywhere in the Empire, even places you wouldn't expect them to be. They are always hatching plots to one-up each other. Old battlegrounds, barrows, and desecrated locales where the rites of the dead aren't performed are common locations to find a skull of the beast mucking about.

Haunted Skulls and the Icons

In some parts of the Necropolis haunted skulls are more common than ravens. The Lich King's winter palace has a room full of watch skulls, tuned carefully to produce what he deems "music." The Archmage has a collection of Tutelary Craniums (black skulls) that act as advisors to some of his servants.

Adventure Hooks

The Catacomb Raider—There are treasures beyond imagining, if you don't mind descending deep into vast grave-tunnels. A rival catacomb raider has boasted to you that they can get to the golden skull before you can—the race is on!

The Crystal Lady—The adventurers encounter a weeping ghost with a skull floating inside it. If they can comfort the ghostly lady without her being reminded that she is dead, come morning she will depart for the next world, leaving behind her skull as a gift. The skull can be crafted into a magical implement if the party can find an enchanter who is willing to do the job. If the party bungles it and reminds the ghost-skull that she is dead, she will transform into a haunted skull and attack them, calling forth other skulls from nearby graves to aid her.

The Flaming Skull—An orange-painted skull wreathed in flame and mounted atop a suit of midnight black armor is terrorizing the countryside. It rides abroad at night on a stallion, hunting down those that have committed what it deems to be crimes. The villagers all attribute different powers to it (able to pass through walls, turns into a cloud of bats, breathes fire), and the more drinks they are bought the wilder their tales get. In actuality the monster is a drow in disguise working for the local land-owner to punish those who are late with rent, keeping the population cowed and compliant through fear. The drow chose that disguise, however, due to a local legend that has a basis in history; and the terror of the villagers will soon awaken that ancient evil.

The Haunting of the Barrel Rose—The ship of a desperate captain is haunted by an unseen screaming skull and nothing she does will placate it. She will give you half of her profits from her next trip if you can discover how to stop the skull from screaming, or put an end to it.

The Marl Wolf—A skull of the beast with a body made from marl-stones is haunting the lakes near a cluster of villages. It waits until fishermen or lone travelers pass nearby, and then leaps out to try to drown them. It has been destroyed many times but each time the skull reconstitutes its body from the marl-stones of the lakes. Some ancient tragedy happened there that keeps the undead monster coming back. The villagers want the beast gone, but they are unwilling to discuss what dark occurrence happened all those years ago.

The Restless Skull—After defeating a haunted skull the adventurers can't sleep well. They are kept awake all night by screaming inside their heads. After seeking advice they discover that they must quest for a special mystic glue that they can use to put the shattered skull back together, and then once the skull is repaired they must return it to where they encountered it. There are three snags: the mystic glue requires feathers from a specific talking crow that lives in the Dire Wood; the parts of the skull have been taken as trophies by a band of orcs; and the adventurers are not regaining their full recoveries when they rest due to the screaming.

"The sinful remain, joyous are those released from the shackles of undeath."
—Missives of Orien, Ch 4 v 29

HELLBUGS

hook scuttler

Most "demon attacks" near hellholes are actually attacks by giant insects hideously warped by demonic influence. This is the type of pedantic distinction that paladins of the Priestess are taught to avoid when counseling survivors.

Hellbugs are mutated or oddly spawned insect creatures that thrive on traces of demonic influence leaking from the hellholes and some living dungeons. They aren't demons, though peasants and innocents usually can't tell the difference while fleeing.

Trace amounts of demonic power work well for hellbugs—larger concentrations of such power generally kill them. You won't find hellbugs inside most hellholes, just in the neighborhood. Similarly, the Abyss holds far too much demonic power for them, but there's probably a band surrounding the Abyss, particularly in the Red Wastes, that has the right "dosage" of demonic influence.

Play hellbugs as intelligent or bestial as you like. Most of them are probably more or less mindless insects, and that's our default concept. But how terrible is it if some are almost as intelligent as humans? No matter how you slice the hellbugs' existence, they're not long for this world. One way or another, they're doomed, even if they could somehow win the favor of the icon that seems most responsible for their existence.

Boombug

If these creatures didn't start as one of the Diabolist's little jokes, they've become one now. Unlike most other hellbugs, they can sometimes be temporarily pacified by cultic rituals, so Diabolist cultists often use them as distraction techniques or expendable watchdogs.

2nd level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +5

Gnawing teeth +6 vs. AC—5 damage
Miss: 2 damage.
Puff go boom: When an enemy's attack hits the boombug and leaves it staggered with an odd number of hit points, it explodes and dies. (Even hit points? No problem). When it explodes, each nearby creature not engaged with it takes 1d4 thunder damage, and it makes the following attack against each creature engaged with it.
C: Thunderous explosion +9 vs. PD—12 thunder damage
Miss: 5 thunder damage.

Nastier Specials
Latches on: When the boombug hits with *gnawing teeth*, the target takes a –5 penalty to disengage checks until it's no longer engaged with the boombug.

AC	**16**	
PD	15	**HP 36**
MD	11	

Hellwasp

The screeching buzz of this insect's wings sound like curse words in the languages of ancient demon priests. It's another reason why you're better off not studying ancient demon languages.

2nd level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +8

Necrotizing stinger +6 vs. PD—5 damage
Natural even hit: 5 ongoing acid damage (easy save ends, 6+), and the hellwasp can pop free from the target.

Virulent injection: When a creature fails a save against the hellwasp's ongoing acid damage, it gains a random condition until it saves against that damage. Have the player roll a d4 to determine the condition: 1. confused; 2. weakened; 3. dazed; 4. vulnerable.

Flight: Hellwasps are adroit fliers that can hover and even fly backward.

Nastier Specials
Lethal injection: The save versus the stinger's ongoing acid damage is a normal save (11+) instead of an easy save.

AC	**18**	
PD	16	**HP 28**
MD	12	

Hook Scuttler

Scorpion? Mantis? Giant beetle? Disturbing nightmare thing? Yes, all mushed together and as big as your barbarian friend.

2nd level blocker [BEAST]
Initiative: +5

Claws and mandibles +7 vs. AC—8 damage

Spiky bits: When a hook scuttler moves to engage an enemy it wasn't engaged with at the start of its turn, that enemy takes 1d6 damage. When an enemy tries to disengage from the hook scuttler and fails, it takes 1d6 damage.

Nastier Specials
Corpse eater: When a nearby enemy drops to 0 hit points or below in the battle, the hook scuttler will ignore other enemies and move to attack that unconscious enemy until that enemy is dead.

AC	**20**	
PD	15	**HP 30**
MD	14	

Swarming Maw

They leave behind a foul black wisp of poison gas when they teleport. It's not enough to kill you, or even make you sick, unless you accidentally inhale as you're screaming in pain from their tearing jaws.

2nd level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +6

Serrated maw +8 vs. AC—6 damage
Natural even hit: The swarming maw can teleport to engage a nearby enemy it can see that is already engaged by at least one other hellbug.
Miss: The first time each battle the serrated maw misses, the target takes 1d4 damage for each hellbug engaged with it.

Nastier Specials
Ongoing swarm: The serrated maw also deals miss damage the second time it misses with a *serrated maw* attack each battle.

AC	**17**	
PD	15	**HP 38**
MD	14	

Building Battles

Unintelligent hellbugs pretty much hunt alongside other hellbugs, but it's not uncommon to have them move in mixed packs. A group that includes three of the four types can pose weird problems for adventurers, or even be truly deadly if there's too many boombugs exploding.

Intelligent hellbugs are a disturbing concept. We're not sure even gnolls could work with them, but bug demons might be able to establish a working relationship. You judge.

Hellbugs and the Icons

These creatures have almost nothing to do with the type of true power represented by the icons.

Diabolist: These bugs are seriously beneath her notice. The demons hate them too, but demons hate everything so that's not actually weird.

Emperor: If the Empire ever gets serious about trying to eliminate hellbugs, it will be because it can't eliminate the hellholes and killing hellbugs will at least give the barons less to complain about.

High Druid: There are giant bees and giant wasps flitting around giant flowers in many of the high mountain valleys. These aren't those bugs. Kill them all and burn the bodies to send the poisons into the cleansing winds.

Orc Lord: Boombugs are hilarious.

Adventure Hooks

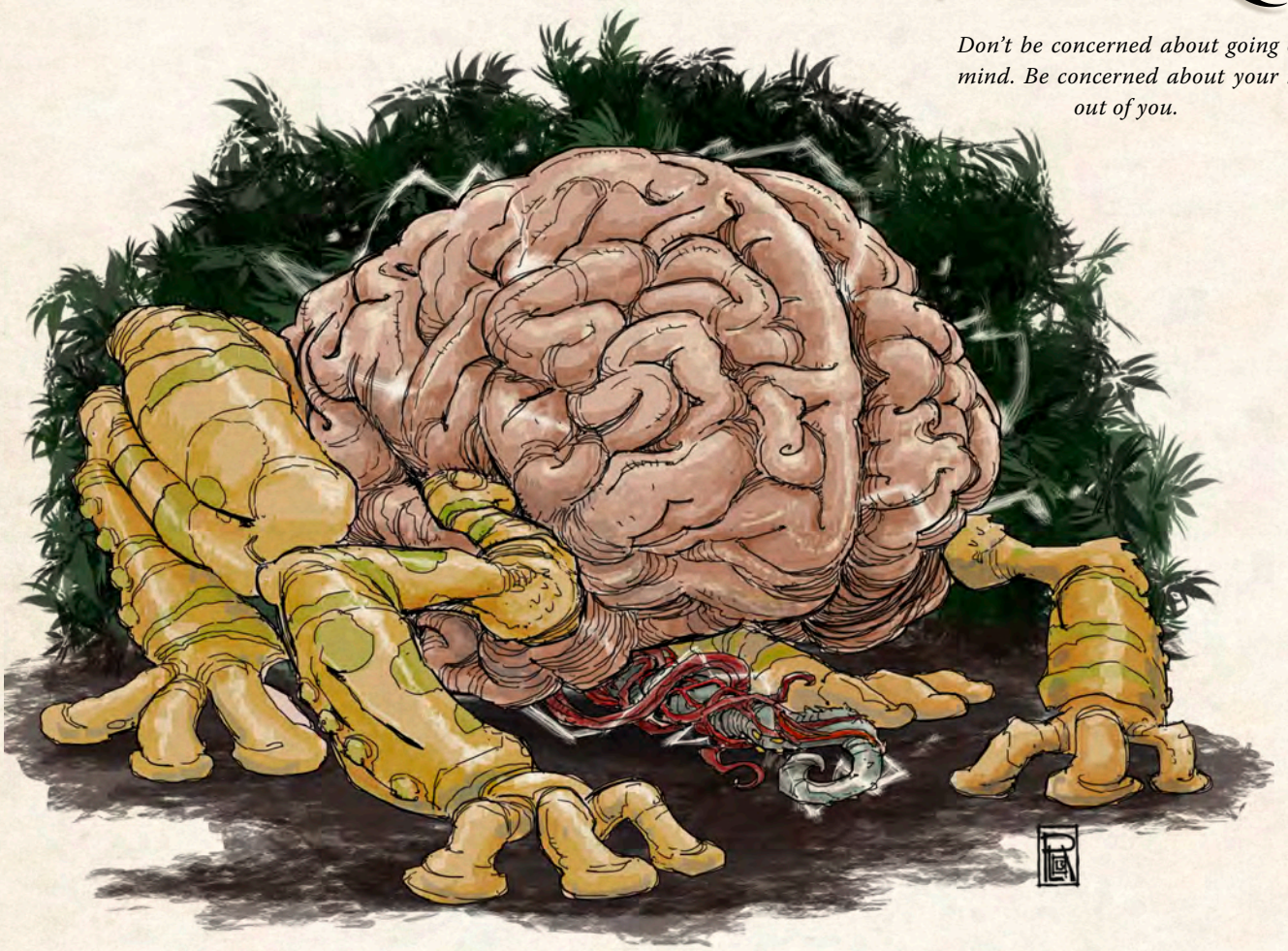
Bounty & Schemes—Foothold can't do much about the hellholes to the west, but some of its merchants can afford to offer a bounty to adventurers who bring back the identifying portions of slain hellbugs. The second adventure begins if any of the adventurers wonder what the merchants are doing with the parts, and it involves trade out of Shadow Port with factions that can't be traded with out of Glitterhaegen.

Cleansing the Citadel—A nest of hellbugs has established itself somehow in the ruins of the Golden Citadel. It's a holy mission just right for adventurer-tier heroes and way beneath the dignity of full champions of the Great Gold Wyrm.

Island Eruption—Hellbugs flying around an area in the Midland Sea might indicate that there is a new hellhole somehow growing beneath the waves. Can it be killed while the wards of the Midland Sea still treat it like a monstrous threat instead of an established island?

INTELLECT DEVOURER

Don't be concerned about going out of your mind. Be concerned about your mind going out of you.



Intelligent Body Snatchers

The intellect devourer is a creation of the Wizard King during his infamous descent into madness. The creature is composed of a humanoid brain and six stumpy legs, with each leg culminating in three equally stumpy but dexterous digits. It can't see, hear, taste, or smell on its own, though those senses become available from the body it inhabits. It navigates mostly through reading the sensory input of nearby creatures. It also has inherent sensitivity to temperature and barometric fluctuations.

Roleplaying

Outside combat, it's extraordinarily difficult to see anything overtly wrong with a creature that has had its brain consumed and replaced by an intellect devourer, even using magic. If you feel like there's a good reason that a devourer might be exposed, something involving rituals or magic of observation or a strong icon relationship result, make it a DC 25 skill check to see the truth about the 3rd level devourer and a DC 30 skill check to perceive the presence of the 6th level intellect assassin.

Combat: Hiding in its Hosts

The devourer is a creature whose living victims tend not to recognize its presence until the opportunity to escape safely is gone. Due to its fragile composition, it usually chooses to enter combat within a host body whose brain it has devoured and replaced with its own form. This host body could be any other sort of humanoid. When building battles, choose the stats for any 3rd level humanoid and ignore its spells or special attacks, using only its melee attacks while the intellect devourer runs the brainless body. (The 6th level intellect assassin is naturally best hosted in a 6th level humanoid.) You'll also probably want to ignore the host body as a factor in balancing the battle. Use the intellect devourer as the monster that contributes to how tough the battle is supposed to be.

Early battle: While in the host body, the devourer makes no attacks of its own. Instead it studies its opponents' moves and catalogs their strengths and weaknesses (analysis that is abstracted by the intellect devourer's *psychovore* ability). If the intellect devourer believes its side is going to lose without doing much damage to its enemies, it might try to flee before its host body can be destroyed.

Once the host body drops to 0 hit points, the intellect devourer must emerge. Don't telegraph its existence until its next action—an intellect devourer bursting from the skull of a fallen enemy is so much scarier than an intellect devourer revealed as a threat immediately after the host-monster falls.

The psychovore bonuses to the devourer's attacks and defenses represent what it has learned of the PCs' combat abilities. In the devourer's ideal world, it quickly incapacitates an opponent. Assuming no other immediate threats are present, the devourer goes to work eating and assimilating the knowledge of the vanquished foe. It may also enter the opponent's skull and impersonate the creature toward some end.

In the imperfect world of a battle with a full group of heroes, an intellect devourer isn't all that likely to get the time and space to properly devour a new brain. But there's always hope.

Intellect Devourer

3rd level spoiler [ABERRATION]
Initiative +5

C: Recall trauma +8 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—16 psychic damage
Natural even hit: The target can't add the escalation die to its attacks (save ends).

C: Ego scourge +8 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—10 psychic damage, and the target must choose one: take 10 extra damage; OR lose two points (cumulative) from its highest current background (min 0) until the next full heal-up

C: Mind wipe +10 vs. MD (one nearby enemy per point on esc. die)—The target can neither detect the intellect devourer's presence nor remember it was ever there to begin with. If no enemy in the battle remembers the devourer is there, remove it from play. Each nearby enemy immediately detects the devourer's presence if it makes an attack or if it doesn't leave the battle by the end of its next turn.
Limited use: 1/battle.

Exploit trauma: The intellect devourer's crit range with attacks against MD expands by 2.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

Psychovore: An intellect devourer remembers the current escalation die value the first time its host body drops to 0 hit points in a battle and gains a bonus equal to that value to all attacks and defenses until the end of the battle.

Nastier Specials
Increased trauma: Add the following extra effect trigger to the intellect devourer's *recall trauma* attack.

Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: The target can't cast spells until the end of its next turn.

AC 19
PD 15 **HP 56**
MD 19

Building Battles

The problem with intellect devourers is that they could be anyone, friend or foe, as they hide inside a host creature. Intellect devourers and derro go hand-in-hand: you never know if they're just crazy, or really hearing a hundred different voices.

We're suggesting you use humanoid hosts only, but if you wanted to be truly nasty you could introduce a rare devourer that's managed to worm its way into the head of a giant or dragon. The host body presents a difficult fight, and then the devourer emerges when the heroes are badly beat down. The only clue a group of heroes might have in such a fight is that, for example, the dragon never uses its breath weapon or other special abilities, only fangs and claws.

Inserting Intellect Devourer Story During Battle

The intellect devourer provides a unique combat scenario in which players can interject backstory if that's something the group is really invested in and doesn't mind interrupting the action for a few moments. The first time a character is hit by *recall trauma*, ask what memory the devourer is pulling to the surface that messes with their confidence. Did a trusted comrade die in battle beside them? Did a mentor berate them for poor performance? Did life just take an unexpected turn? Allow the player a minute or so to come up with a flashback from their character's past to reveal some doubt or weakness.

In addition, don't offer the choice from the *ego scourge* attack purely mechanically. Wrap it in fiction first. For example, *"You can feel (the devourer) blanking your mind, removing knowledge and experience from you. Do you want to spend more energy to fight the siphon or are you willing to let it happen so you can focus on your attacks?"* If the player asks for the mechanical difference, describe it fully. Memorable battles are not usually filled with statistically difficult monsters as they are with emotionally difficult choices.

Intellect Devourers and the Icons

Archmage: The icon has never admitted to creating and using intellect devourers. Rumors abound that troublesome students are fed to intellect devourers as punishment for subversive behavior or that some of the guards patrolling the grounds of the Mage's College are intellect devourers in disguise, stealing the best ideas from the brightest students for the Archmage's personal benefit. Neither rumor has been proven, however.

Dwarf King: Unlike some of the other icons, he doesn't have the ability to create intellect devourers and so must make secret deals to obtain them. The stone and iron constructs built by the dwarves are usually animated with dwarven magic; a few well-crafted automatons are instead gifted with a devourer for a brain, massively improving their ability to learn and make high-level decisions.

It's Brain Surgery!

The threat of having one's brain eaten by an intellect devourer ought to be real but at the same time proves difficult in a game context. Who controls the devoured character? Are they just dead? That's certainly an option. Do they become an NPC? Maybe, but if the GM never uses the NPC again, all the possible interesting consequences of a possessed PC can easily go to waste. In the spirit of "death is no excuse to stop working," here's an optional mechanic to handle brain-eating in a way that can keep everyone at the table.

When a PC has dropped to 0 hit points or lower and is making death saves, the player can choose to have the character's brain eaten by the intellect devourer. Mechanically, this choice is identical to rolling a natural 20 on a death save. The PC can spend a recovery and begin taking actions again as normal. During the next quick rest, the player chooses three background points to keep and removes all others. The GM will then replace those background points with new backgrounds. Some possibilities are included below.

The PC is no longer who they were before exactly. Acquiescing to the process, and being a rather tough hero, makes this devourer/victim relationship unlike the devourer's usual body-snatchings, especially in the sense that the creature maintains access to the character's full range of powers.

The devourer, being intelligent and a master of infiltration, probably wants to pass as being the character until some goal is achieved, so it makes sense for the player to continue to play the character as they were before. On the other hand, the character is not only a halfling rogue but also a drow queen, a criminal half-elven wizard, and a few dozen or hundred other minor personas. It's going to start showing in how the character approaches the world through their skill rolls.

Examples of new devourer background selections follow:

- +1 101 Past Lives, +2 Queen Maraila of the Spiderwood, +2 Renegade Wizard
- +1 Oh Gods! The Voices!, +2 Emperor's Bodyguard, +2 Dwarven Brewmaster
- +1 Random Trivia, +2 Escaped From Omen, +2 Servant of the Red

Lich King: He first created the intellect devourers during his time as Wizard King and continues that dubious condition into his un-life as well. Devourers in the service of the Lich King ride passively inside zombies and "recruit" fallen enemies when the bulk of the fighting is over. Some aggressive devourers act as anti-casters from within their zombie hosts, who are themselves vulnerable to things like fireballs and holy energy.

Prince of Shadows: The Prince employs devourers in a wonderfully devious technique to conveniently remove meddlers and gather privileged information. The intellect devourer uses a hijacked body to make an assassination attempt on the target, which is intended to fail. During the feint attempt the devourer slowly saps the target's psychic energy, leaving it vulnerable to psychic trauma as it determines what type of trauma would be most efficient against the target. Once its host body is defeated, the devourer transmits a single psychic killing blow to the target, leaves the original corpse host and enters the target host. On the outside, it appears that the target has thwarted her own assassination and all is well! In truth, the devourer removes the target's memories and knowledge and acts as her just long enough to find an excuse to report back to the Prince discreetly in person. A few days later, the target inexplicably "dies in her sleep" as the devourer emerges for the last time.

The Three: The icons have found that replacing one mind of an ettin with an intellect devourer makes a frightening combination of brains and brawn for which most foes just aren't prepared. The remaining natural mind tends to become more docile as it's continually fodder for the devourer. The new hybrid creature is far easier to command, but the lack of arguing between the two heads will give its true nature away to anyone who knows what to look for.

Names

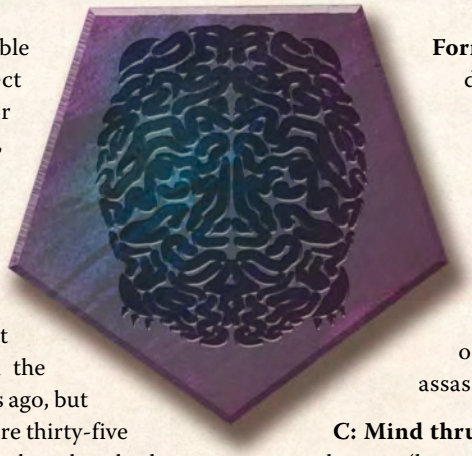
As one might expect, a creature that moves around from body to body absorbing the memories of and impersonating other sentient creatures is going to have some unusual ideas about names and identity. While impersonating someone else, an intellect devourer will simply use the name of the impersonated being. When outside a host body, intellect devourers communicate through telepathy using experiences and memories as language. On the rare occasion that a devourer is discovered inside a host body and prevented from either escaping or using its psychic attacks, it will identify itself according to its greatest achievement, regardless of outward identity. Some famous devourers of the previous Ages are known as "Was Three Queens," "Victory at Lorgesse Valley," and "Wrote the Grimoire." "What have you done?" is the equivalent of "what is your name?" among intellect devourers.

Things Intellect Devourers Carry

Devourers are more often the thing being carried than the thing doing the carrying. Cornering or defeating an intellect devourer on its own is almost never going to bring about immediate material benefit. On the other hand, the amount of obscure and private information that any individual devourer has readily memorized is staggering.

A devourer feeding on a sentient mind has a "metabolism" somewhat analogous to a humanoid metabolism. Thoughts and memories can either be immediately broken down into psychic energy for food or stored whole for later consumption. Where humanoid energy storage (fat) is not particularly precious,

knowledge and memory can be extremely valuable to the right client so it's wise for the intellect devourer to choose carefully what it uses for food and what it uses for other purposes, such as gaining favor from other creatures or impersonating a host body. General education and mundane memory are the first to be consumed, where spell formulae, knowledge that could incriminate others, or unique experiences are retained. An intellect devourer is likely to have already destroyed the memory of what its host ate for lunch four days ago, but knows EXACTLY where its host hid the treasure thirty-five years ago. A long-lived and clever devourer may have hundreds or even thousands of hosts' worth of secrets saved up. Locations of treasures, firsthand experience of historical events, experimental spells, forbidden divine revelations, memories of illicit trysts, and backalley dealings are just a few pearls of information adventurers might want to extract from a devourer somehow.



Oddly enough, the same mechanism that provides intellect devourers with vast troves of useful knowledge also causes them to carry around a lot of oddball trinkets and reminders when in a host body. Memory space is at a premium within a devourer so it will leave itself clues to piece together necessary information lost in devoured memories from the ones it retains. Also, with so many different memories retained, it's not hard for a devourer to forget who it is supposed to be at any given moment. Childhood toys, love letters, small bits of jewelry, and diaries are all common items for a marauding devourer to have on its host body. Scraps of paper with hastily scribbled notes are another big giveaway for an otherwise well-disguised devourer.

Adventure Hooks

382 Pilgrims—A rare, magnanimous intellect devourer near Santa Cora is walking the bodies of dead worshippers from the nearby wilderness into the city. It leaves them near the temples of good deities with notes like "My name is _____. I am from _____. Please contact _____ concerning my death." The Priestess would like the creature (who will identify itself as "382 Pilgrims" if discovered) brought to her.

Alternative Medicine—The Amira of New Port has been looking sickly recently and now suddenly wants to venture into territory under the supposed control of the Prince of Shadows looking for a cure? That doesn't seem right.

Meeting of the Minds—The Dwarf King has discreetly purchased a small number of intellect devourers. Unbeknownst to him, the vendor works for the Prince of Shadows. The adventurers may need to deliver, receive, or disrupt this transaction as their icon relationships imply.

Intellect Assassin

You could argue the intellect assassin is more humane, but only if being strangled is better than being stabbed.

6th level blocker [aberration]
Initiative +9

Formless fist +9 vs. PD (one enemy)—25 damage; OR if the target is fighting a *psychic duel* (see below), it can choose to take a –4 to penalty to its next check instead

Quick use: The assassin can take 15 damage to make this attack as a quick action (once per round).

C: Insidious domination +11 vs. MD (one enemy)—14 damage, and the opponent is locked in a psychic duel with the assassin (see below)

C: Mind thrust +10 vs. MD (one confused enemy)—35 damage (but only 50 damage on a crit)

Exploit trauma: An intellect assassin's crit range with attacks against MD expands by 2.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

Psychovore: An intellect devourer remembers the current escalation die value the first time it becomes unhosted in a battle and gains a bonus equal to that value to all attacks and defenses until the end of the battle.

Psychic duel: A psychic duel occurs when the intellect assassin hits with an *insidious domination* attack against a creature. At the start of the creature's next turn, it must make an Intelligence skill check and can use a background that applies to psychic ability (if any). The result of this check determines that creature's status until the start of its next turn. To maintain the psychic duel, the assassin must spend a move action each turn.

Psychic Duel Result: Status

15 or less: The creature is confused until the end of its turn. It also can't make opportunity attacks until the start of its next turn and takes a –2 penalty to its next *psychic duel* check.

16–22: The creature is pressured—it takes a –2 penalty to attacks against any enemy except the assassin (dueling opponent).

23–27: The creature steadies itself and can use a move action this turn to escape the *psychic duel*. If the creature chooses not to (or can't) escape the duel, it gains a +2 bonus to its next *psychic duel* check.

28+: As 23–27, but the creature takes advantage and gains a +4 bonus to its next *psychic duel* check instead of +2. In addition, the assassin takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls that target other creatures.

AC	**22**	
PD	16	**HP 90**
MD	20	

The intellect assassin is more concerned about containing collateral damage than the standard intellect devourer. It wants to finish its opponent in one swift blow if at all possible and keep that opponent focused on itself. The *formless fist* attack helps the assassin convince its target to submit peaceably. Again, couch *formless fist* with connected fiction: *"The assassin tightens its psychic grip on you. Images, maybe memories, flash through your mind of honorable surrenders and merciful victors. You can almost hear it whisper 'it would be so much better for you if you would just give in.'"*

JOROGUMO

Weaver of lies, thief of love, collector of hearts from a coterie of hopelessly besotted victims. Literal beating hearts. The kind you normally can't live without.

The Spider Curled Around your Still-beating Heart

The jorogumo is a spider-like creature the size of a human that lures people to their doom through lies, deceit, and illusion. The top half of the creature looks like a human female or male, or in some cases, an elf. The bottom half of the body reflects the spider heritage, having multiple small legs and a slightly more bulbous body.

Most jorogumos go to great pains to hide their spidery undercarriage from the general public, either through clever public staging, minor illusion cantrips, deception magic borrowed from an icon, or even specially constructed hoop skirts. In roleplaying mechanics terms, PCs who make a concerted effort to see through a jorogumo's veils would have to succeed on a DC 30 Wisdom check, but that's not something you should be rolling casually. Jorogumos are best revealed through their actions.

And speaking of those actions . . . jorogumos are seducers who overpower those who are sexually attracted to them through a combination of emotional manipulation, romantic illusion, and supernatural charm. Male jorogumo prey most often on women. Female jorogumo have an easier time preying on men, but obviously same sex victims "volunteer" just as readily, and a heart's a heart so far as the jorogumo is concerned.

Yes, hearts are where it's at for the jorogumo. Literal beating hearts magically removed from the living bodies of the poor souls it has charmed. Once someone is lured into the web of lies the monster weaves, the jorogumo will get its chosen victim alone. It uses its sharp claws to cut open their chest and remove their heart, which the jorgumo places in a jar or box, specially designed to preserve the organ. The jorogumo hides these jars away in its lair.

The Woven

Those who've lost their hearts to a jorogumo don't die. The monster's magic keeps them alive and they follow their master around like lovesick schoolboys, single-minded groupies, or brainwashed cultists, depending on the jorogumo's leanings. So long as the jorogumo holds their hearts, it controls their minds. Jorogumos call their heartless victims "the Woven." With their shirts off, they might be identified by the scars on their chests where the creature removed the heart and stitched the skin back together, but they take care to remain clothed in public.

The Woven act normally when their mistress or master is not in sight. But when the jorogumo appears, they stand ready to serve the creature in whatever mindless ways they are commanded. They will kill friends, push aside lovers, and forsake families all for a single touch from the creature. Killing the jorogumo normally breaks the spell, unless the Woven is so far gone that it doesn't want to give up on its "love."

Of course the Woven will do anything to prevent their jorogumo from being slain. It's hard to blame them. When the jorogumo's magic ends, the lives of its Woven wind down quickly. They will all die unless they find some other great magic capable of keeping them alive. Death isn't instant; each Woven must roll an easy save at the moment of the jorogumo's death and another easy save each round, every five minutes, or every hour or so, whichever time period the GM thinks makes a more dramatic story. They die on the first failure, but until that moment they can either attempt to claim vengeance for their lost love or try to make up for the horrors they've been part of after giving up their hearts. Go with whatever makes the best story, or end it quickly without bothering with rolls, your call.

Monstrous Ecology

Unlike most monsters, jorogumos prefers areas of civilization. They hole up in towns and cities, slowly building a web of Woven and victims. Even without their supernatural abilities, jorogumos play on fears and securities to manipulate their communities. A jorogumo is out for its own self-preservation, and sometimes a well-placed lie can accomplish more than a dozen magic heart storage jars ever could. Adventurers looking to slay a jorogumo will have to sift through layers of good people duped into thinking the spider is a "good-hearted man" or "a really nice girl."

Individual jorogumo might have grand purposes for the hearts and control they collect, but they seldom seem to get around to accomplishing much with it. The effort it takes to maintain the tapestry of lies probably precludes most grand strategies.

For the storytelling gender-based impact of it, we've presented the four jorogumo that follow as unambiguously male or female, but you could gender-swap the monsters by renaming some attacks.

In Defense of their Love

"You don't understand. She loves me. She's not like . . . that when we're alone together. How can you be sure she killed all those people? You're lying. You didn't see her! Why can't you be happy for me? I don't need your help! I don't need your protection! She didn't love the others! She loved me! Me alone! She said so, in her beautiful, beautiful voice! And now all I hear is her screaming! Screaming because of what you said. What you want to do to us! I won't let you! I'll fight you if I must! To the death! My own father! My own brother! All of you! I'd rather die than see her come to harm on your jealous blades!"

—Kuroda the Poet, in defense of his binding bride

Spinneret Doxy

The music inside the brothel suddenly stops. The doors lock and the madam reveals just how many legs she had under her skirts. Looks like happy hour is over for you, but it has just begun for her.

3rd level spoiler [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +5

Bite of the love bug +8 vs. AC (or automatic critical hit vs. an *infatuated* enemy)—10 damage, and target is *infatuated* (save ends)

Infatuated: Infatuated enemies can't attack the spinneret doxy or her Woven, but can convince themselves that other allies of the doxy don't love her properly and should be slain. They also prattle on about how their friends shouldn't attack her, but are too love-smitten to properly prevent it—they won't attack their real allies.

R: Bring me flowers +8 vs. MD (one *infatuated* enemy)—The target chooses one: it takes 6d6 psychic damage; OR as a free action, it moves next to the spinneret doxy (possibly provoking opportunity attacks), who engages it

C: Stop in the name of love +8 vs. MD (each nearby *infatuated* enemy)—The target chooses one: it takes 6d6 psychic damage; OR it's stuck (save ends)

Give me your heart: When the doxy drops an enemy to 0 hit points or lower, she will move next to that creature and attempt to remove the target's heart. The creature must begin making last gasp saves as she cuts their chest open. On the fourth failure, the doxy takes the heart and the target dies and becomes undead under her control. If the bride is stunned or moved away from the creature and can't return to it on her turn, the creature doesn't have to make a last gasp save that turn.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 45**
MD	13	

Lethal Lothario

Being attracted to the wrong type of man becomes a real problem when he's this type of monster.

4th level leader [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +7

Brutal kiss +9 vs. AC—10 damage
Natural even hit: Any woven engaged with the target can attack it as a free action.

C: Unhealthy attraction +9 vs. MD (nearby enemy with the fewest hit points)—10 psychic damage and the target is hampered until the end of the battle or until it takes one turn as if it were confused.
Miss: 5 ongoing psychic damage.

Give me your heart: When the lothario drops an enemy to 0 hit points or lower, he will move next to that creature and attempt to remove the target's heart. The creature must begin making last gasp saves as he cuts their chest open. On the fourth failure, the lothario takes the heart and the target dies and becomes undead under her control. If the lothario is stunned or moved away from the creature and can't return to it on his turn, the creature doesn't have to make a last gasp save that turn.

AC 20
PD 18 **HP 50**
MD 17

Binding Bride

The high-pitched coquettish giggle slowly lowers to a throaty chuckle. The bride turns with glowing red eyes from under her veil. Now that the ceremony is over, the feast begins. From the look of it, she's starting with the best man.

5th level spoiler [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Biting kiss +10 vs. AC—18 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 10 ongoing poison damage.

Unwrapping my gift +10 vs. AC—18 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The binding bride can make a *biting kiss* attack as a free action.

R: A bouquet of webs +10 vs. PD (up to 2 enemies in a group)—The target is hampered (save ends)

R: You ruined my special day +10 vs. MD—The target takes 18 psychic damage each time it attacks the binding bride (save ends)
Limited use: 1/battle, as a quick action.

Give me your heart: When the binding bride drops an enemy to 0 hit points or lower, she will move next to that creature as a free action and attempt to remove the target's heart. The creature must begin making last gasp saves as she cuts its chest open. On the fourth failed save, the bride takes the heart and the target dies and becomes undead under her control. If the bride is stunned or moved away from the creature and can't return to it on her turn, the creature doesn't have to make a last gasp save that turn.

AC 21
PD 15 **HP 72**
MD 19

Swarm Prince

Sometimes prince charming's kiss brings the sleep of reason.

5th level spoiler [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Palm strike +10 vs. PD—10 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage
Miss: 5 damage.

R: Royal blessing +10 vs. MD—15 negative energy damage, and if one or more Woven have been slain this battle, return one Woven to life in the location where it died
Limited use: The swarm prince can use this ability only when the escalation die is even.

C: Hush my darling +10 vs. MD (the nearby conscious enemy with the fewest hit points)—5 psychic damage, and the target is unconscious (hard save ends, 16+; it also ends if the target takes 15 damage)
Limited use: 1/battle, and the ability recharges when the swarm prince hits with *palm strike*.

Surrounded by friends: The swarm prince gains a +1 bonus to all defenses for each nearby Woven.

Give me your heart: When the prince drops an enemy to 0 hit points or lower, he will move next to that creature and attempt to remove the target's heart. The creature must begin making last gasp saves as he cuts their chest open. On the fourth failure, the prince takes the heart and the target dies and becomes undead under his control. If the prince is stunned or moved away from the creature and can't return to it on his turn, the creature doesn't have to make a last gasp save that turn.

AC 19
PD 18 **HP 80**
MD 16

The Woven

They were your friends, your family, your loved ones. Now they are puppets, dancing from heart strings.

4th level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +6

Clumsy strike +9 vs. AC—7 damage

R: Why aren't you happy for ussss +8 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—5 psychic damage as the target's mind reels against the horror of the truth

AC 18
PD 16 **HP 13 (mook)**
MD 12

Mook: Kill one woven mook for every 13 hp you deal to the mob.

Building Battles

Because of their nature and desire to blend in, jorogumos often work with humanoids in civilized regions. Creatures from any race could be allied to them as Woven, and through that influence, the Woven could even convince local authorities that the PCs are dangerous or criminals (local town guards, legionnaires, etc.). At the very least, there might be an influential suitor or three (Woven or not) who is asked to discourage the PCs from interfering.

Jorogumo and the Icons

Diabolist: A creature that manipulates feelings for its own selfish gains to cause untold confusion and bloodshed? The Diabolist couldn't love jorogumos more if she tried. They are often the icon's eyes and ears in a city thanks to their location at the center of a web of sin. The Diabolist gets touchy, however, if a jorogumo sells information to the Prince of Shadows. The icon understands the creature has to survive and usually lets it off with a warning if it gives up the dirt free of charge.

Elf Queen: Jorogumos that don't find their way into cities and towns often make their homes in forest cliffs under the protection of the Elf Queen. Some members of the Court whisper that the Elf Queen allows jorogumos to prosper in her domain because they taught her the secret of removing hearts to put in special containers. Some believe that a suitor wishing to become the Queen's Consort must go through the process. Others suggest the Queen has removed her own heart and hidden it away so she can lead without emotion.

Lich King: The Lich King resents jorogumos for playing at heart removal games that come close to mocking its phylactery supremacy. But his forces can tolerate jorogumos for a time, mainly because the Woven make excellent undead servants once the jorogumo is slain. It's just a question of how many Woven you're looking to "recruit."

Prince of Shadows: Lovers carry secrets like water. Jorogumos have many lovers to choose from. Impassioned whispers are music to the Prince's ears, because those caught in the spider's spell will do anything to impress their lovers. The Prince, in exchange, is ready to suggest places where a jorogumo can best take root.

Towns Without Pity

Outside the major cities, a jorogumo's favorite nest is one it built itself. It prefers small hamlets where it can nestle in and work the natural feuds that crop up between villagers. It can manufacture drama if necessary but prefers to amplify tensions already present. Reigniting a long-standing feud between rival families is much more the creature's style than sauntering into town as a stranger who will attract attention.

In the seven great cities, jorogumo hide best in whorehouses, palaces with too many servants, port taverns, and hidden cult temples that think they're the only sinister force in play. Jorogumos in cities often clear out their Woven every few months by sending them on suicide sprees. There's always a fresh batch of desperate lovers just around the corner.

Jorogumos do travel from time to time. Merchant caravans and traveling entertainments offer enterprising jorogumos the ability to lure devotees to their side while avoiding the downside of collecting hearts—the Woven travel with the jorogumo, with their hometown friends and family thinking their friends have run off to join the circus. These jorogumos are rarely seen outside the vehicle used to transport them from place to place. The wagon or ship becomes their lair. The Woven defend it at all costs, since their hearts reside inside, stored in jars in some hidden panel or smuggler's hold.

Names

Binding brides and lethal lotharios prefer short, monosyllabic names. They are trying to blend in with their surroundings. Ostentatious names draw attention they don't want while weaving their webs and stealing hearts. Useful names include: Atia, Dia, Jenya, Rache, Kyra, and Vasha.

Spinneret doxies, on the other hand, love calling attention to themselves. Since they are the top attraction in whatever house they've built, they want an exotic name on the lips of every suitor in the city. Flashy names include: Sweet Silk Sia, Lament Franzini, Pepper Trap Sue, Moonlight Sonata, and Old Lace Snedic.

Swarming princes usually get referred to as minor nobility even when they've decided to try to remain unnoticed. Since they can't help being thought of as noble, they try to use names that blend in wherever they've found themselves in the Empire: Count Silverhand and Sir Benedict near Axis, the Knight of the White Shell near Concord, Sir Tom of the Wall near New Port, and so on.

Adventure Hooks

A Bigger Fish—After capture, a jorogumo falls to its knees and begs for its life. It tells the heroes that if they let it go, it will reveal a far bigger prize: the location of a jar containing the heart of an icon currently at odds with the heroes. Clearly it's lying. But magic or skill checks indicate it "thinks" it's telling the truth, so whose heart is it?

Lovers' Spat—The heartless count escalates quickly when a female jorogumo and a male jorogumo compete for the greatest number of Woven. Are the jorogumos enemies, rivals settling a wager, or truly twisted lovers putting together simultaneous Woven gift offerings?

Return to Sender—The adventurers come across a heart jar in the loot of another slain monster. It is warm to the touch. The person the heart belongs to is still alive, somehow. Will they seek out the heartless to make them whole again? Does the person want their heart back in the first place?

Webbed Pirates—The Emperor offers a bounty on the pirate fleet led by the notorious Captain Weaver. The fleet consists of three ships. The captain is a jorogumo who never spends too much time on any one ship, slowly but surely taking the hearts of each crewmember to ensure their loyalty.

You Can Never Go Home Again—Wiping out the strange town of innocent people corrupted by the jorogumo was easy. Of course, unknown to the heroes, it survived and has moved into the hometown of one of the PCs. Can they rid the town of its influence or will the adventurers be forced to slaughter everyone from the milkmaids to the kindly town cleric?

KOBOLD

Kobolds claim to be the spawn of dragons. Spawn or something-or-other.

kobold skyclaw

Bite-size Fun

If your current campaign sticks to the grim side, these may not be the kobolds you are looking for. Most of these kobolds and their abilities *could* be rephrased more seriously, but we didn't try. If kobold dog riders and dungeon engineers aren't your idea of fun, wave them away with a gesture of your taloned hand.

Kobold Grand-Wizard

"Beware my mighty power! Mighty power!"

0 level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Static jolt +5 vs. AC—2 lightning damage

R: Painful liver inversion hex +4 vs. PD—4 poison damage, or 6 poison damage against dwarves

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

AC 15
PD 13 **HP 5 (mook)**
MD 9

Mook: Kill one kobold grand-wizard mook for every 5 damage you deal to the mob.

New Ability: Trapsters

Some kobolds presented here have the *trapster* ability. Kobolds set up deadfalls and pit traps in areas where they live or travel through. Kobold traps are not the cunningly crafted traps of dungeons but an environmental hazard that enemies might be maneuvered into mid-combat. The *trapster* ability is presented at the end of this entry.

Kobold Skyclaw

The kobolds hurl themselves into battle wearing dragon-winged backpacks. Landing among the enemy they begin to hurl alchemical flasks about—those kobolds that don't explode on impact that is!

2nd level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Spike-toed boots +5 vs. AC—4 damage

C: Alchemical flask +6 vs. PD (one nearby enemy or a far away enemy at –2 atk)—3 damage, and roll a d4 for the effect of the flask's contents

1. *Distilled ankheg spit*: The target takes 3 ongoing acid damage.
2. *Reconstituted remorhaz lymph*: The target takes 3 ongoing fire damage.
3. *Essence of giant spider web*: The target is stuck (save ends).
4. *Kobold blasting powder*: There's a loud bang and the battlefield is obscured with thick smoke. Each non-kobold creature takes a –2 attack penalty during its next turn.

Natural 1: The kobold explodes (see *mook*).

Erratic flight: The kobold flings itself from a trebuchet or ignites an unstable alchemical propellant and lands among its enemies. Each time the kobold uses a move action to fly, roll a d20.

1: It crashes and explodes (see *mook*).
2–15: It lands safely.
16+: It stays aloft and can keep flying.

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

AC	**18**	
PD	16	**HP 7 (mook)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one kobold skyclaw mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob. If an attack roll against a skyclaw is a natural 20 or a skyclaw rolls a natural 1 attack roll or flight roll, it triggers a chain reaction that ripples through all nearby skyclaws in the mob; each one makes an *alchemical flask* attack as a free action as it explodes and dies.

Kobold Engineer

Kobold engineers are part of the reason why kobolds thrive in almost any environment, although they are also adept at creating traps and undermining dwarven tunnels and mine shafts.

3rd level leader [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Wrench, pick, or shovel +8 vs. AC—8 damage
Natural 16+: The engineer's kobold allies gain a +2 attack bonus against the target until the start of the engineer's next turn.

R: Explosive flask +5 vs. PD—The target is vulnerable to non-magical attacks (easy save ends, 6+)
Natural roll is above target's Wisdom (trapster): The blast knocks the target into a trap. See **Trapster** at the end of the kobold entry.

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 45**
MD	13	

Kobold Dog-Rider

Here comes the cavalry! Riding feral terriers, savage corgis, and dire-schnauzers! The tiny doggy armor is adorable, the flaming lances of the riders much less so.

3rd level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Flaming lance +8 vs. AC—6 damage, and 3 ongoing fire damage
Natural 16+: The kobold and its steed pop free from all enemies and can move as a free action.

R: Tiny crossbow +8 vs. AC—9 damage, and the kobold and its steed can move as a free action.
Natural roll is above target's Wisdom (trapster): There is line tied to the barbed dart, pulling/tripping the target into a trap. See **Trapster** at the end of the kobold entry.

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

Canine steed: The steed can't be targeted separately from the kobold. If the kobold dies the dog runs away.

AC	**19**	
PD	16	**HP 41**
MD	12	

Kobold Bravescale

These iron-clad woad-painted kobolds don't run away from danger!

4th level blocker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Spear +9 vs. AC—13 damage
Natural roll is above target's Wisdom (trapster): The kobold pushes or trips the target into a trap. See **Trapster** at the end of the kobold entry.

Disciplined maneuver: If the escalation die is 3+ and this creature has at least two bravescale allies in the battle, whenever an enemy moves to engage the bravescale, it can make a *spear porcupine* attack against that enemy as a free action.
Spear porcupine +11 vs. AC—10 damage

Lock shields: For each other kobold bravescale next to the bravescale or engaged with a creature that this bravescale is engaged with, the bravescale gains a +2 bonus to AC (maximum of +4), and each enemy engaged with the bravescale takes a –2 penalty (maximum of –4) to disengage checks.

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 55**
MD	14	

Kobold Dungeon-Shaman

Dungeon-shamans are wizard-engineers guided by dreams. They usually serve living dungeons, repairing traps and restocking treasure and monsters. In return a dungeon-shaman can call upon a dungeon to mystically entrap an area. Although small and seemingly frail a dungeon-shaman has mystic dungeon-strength.

Double-strength 4th level caster [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Bear traps on chains +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)—13 damage
Natural roll is above target's Wisdom (trapster): The kobold drags the target into a trap. See **Trapster** at the end of the kobold entry.

R: Hex of entrapment +9 vs. MD—26 damage
Natural roll is above target's Wisdom (trapster): The kobold summons a trap that was not previously there, which the target triggers. See **Trapster** at the end of the kobold entry.
Miss: The target is stuck and hampered (save ends both).

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

AC	**19**	
PD	17	**HP 110**
MD	15	

Kobold Shadow-Warrior

Stealthy kobolds with color-changing skin, they climb the walls like lizards and strike from the shadows.

4th level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

C: Throwing star +9 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)—7 damage

C: Stinging dust +6 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—5 damage, and the target takes a –1 penalty to attacks until the end of its next turn

Elusive: If a shadow-warrior hasn't been attacked since the end of its last turn, it can spend all of its actions on its turn to disappear from sight (remove it from play as it gets into position). At the start of its next turn, it reappears (dropping down from the ceiling or springing out of cover and re-entering play) and can make an *elusive strike* attack as a standard action.
C: Elusive strike +13 vs. AC (one nearby creature)—18 damage

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

Wall-crawler: A kobold shadow-warrior can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

AC	**20**	
PD	13	**HP 14 (mook)**
MD	17	

Mook: Kill one kobold shadow-warrior mook for every 14 damage you deal to the mob. Apply damage to shadow-warriors using the elusive ability last (or ignore that damage).

Kobold Dragon-Soul

These kobolds obtained dragon tears and drank them, becoming more draconic. They have claws that drip with acid, can fly using dragon-like wings, and can even spit out globs of burning mucus.

5th level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +10

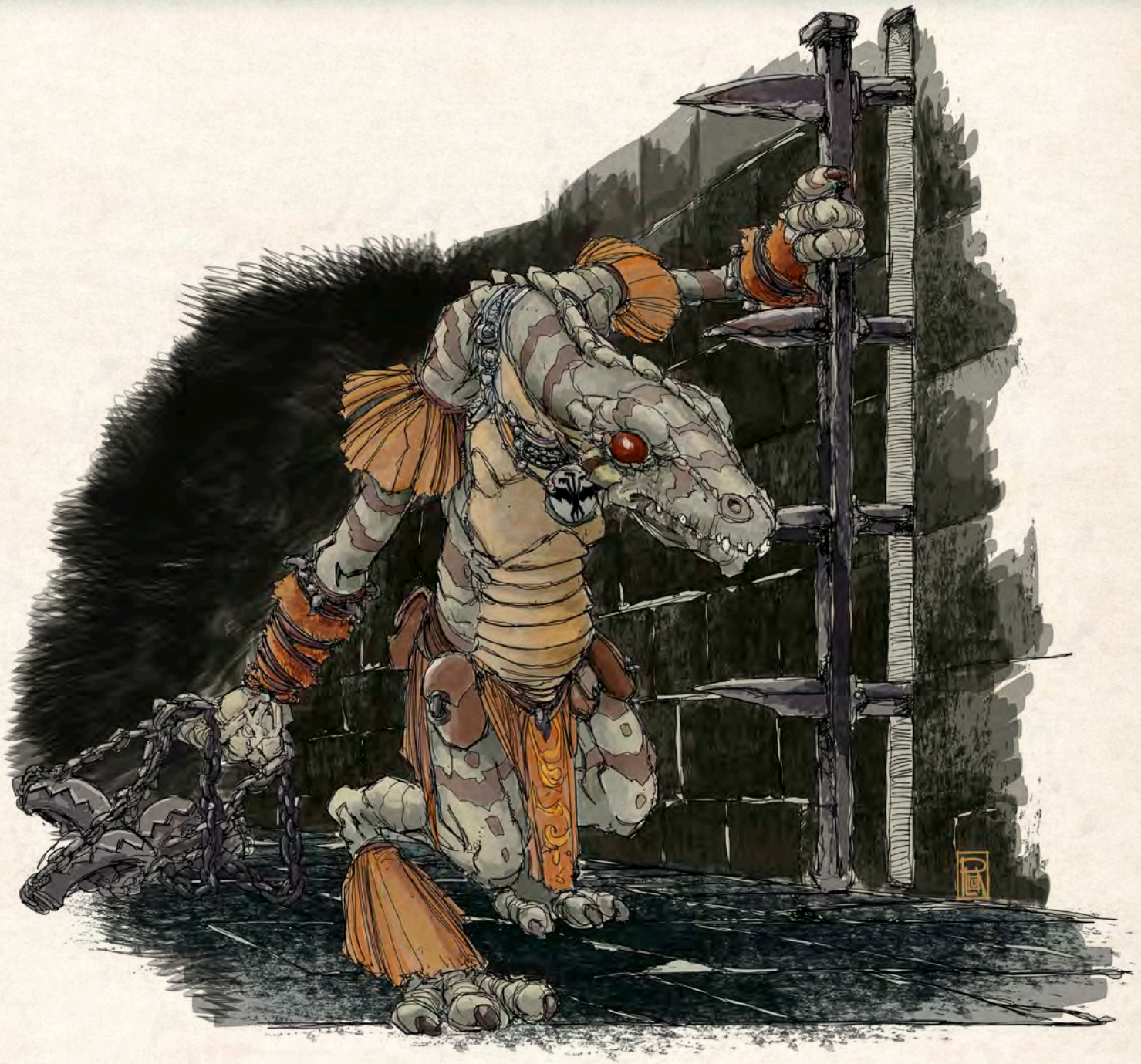
Claws +10 vs. AC—17 damage
Natural even hit: The target also takes 8 ongoing acid damage.

R: Fire spit +10 vs. PD—18 fire damage
Natural even hit: If flying, the kobold can remain in the air until the end of its next turn if it would normally have to land at the end of this turn.

Evasive: Kobolds take no damage from missed attacks.

Flight: A dragon-soul's wings aren't strong enough for sustained flapping flight, but with a headwind and a tall place to launch from it can glide for hours. During battle, however, it must land at the end of its turn if the escalation die is even (but see *fire spit*).

AC	**22**	
PD	19	**HP 70**
MD	14	



Building Battles

Kobolds' allegiances fall into two categories (and we do mean *fall*): they're either subservient fodder for stronger masters, or their allies are creatures they use for their traps.

Many different races ally with kobolds to take advantage of the kobolds' cunning and individual weakness. Goblins are the exception. Kobolds hate goblins (possibly, depending on your tastes, because of the competition for scene-stealing slapstick humor). The kobolds, however, are almost always the ill-treated, lesser half of any pairing, which is why they'll often switch sides. Dragons, of course, often have droves of kobolds adoring them; a dragon uses them to guard the outer regions of their lair, or to snack upon when one of little buggers causes displeasure. Kobolds and lizardmen have occasionally been known to work together, with the kobolds having hero worship of the savages.

Kobolds use some monsters to make their traps more deadly. They will sometimes attempt to keep stirges as pets, using the goop from cobbler stirges in all sorts of interesting ways. If they can manage it (and those who don't are no longer around), they find ways to trap and contain various oozes, using the slimes' acids in their traps. The smartest kobold engineers will even use the oozes as traps.

Kobolds and the Icons

Crusader: Unlike the other mainstream icons of the Empire, the Crusader offers kobolds occasional employment. He sees their value as immoral inventors and engineers and uses them as sappers and tunnel fighters in his sieges. The Crusader also assigns them latrine duty, gives them boring guard-post jobs, and is not beyond ordering his troops to strap kobolds to their shields to punish the disobedient.

Diabolist: She likes the creative cruelty that kobolds bring to their trap designs. Some say that she employs teams of kobolds to design and build vast torture-labyrinths for her. That previous sentence should probably have started with the words "some kobolds say."

Great Gold Wyrm: He is the mightiest of dragons, after all. Perhaps there are a couple of "gold-kobolds" who make scale mail out of copper coins and join his crusade. Kobolds fighting on the side of good confuses everybody, including the kobolds, who sometimes slip back into bad habits.

High Druid: The High Druid could go either way on kobolds. They're not obviously loathsome and destructive like goblins and orcs. But then again, they're dragon-worshippers who mostly aspire to be as loathsome and destructive as dragons and the worst giants.

Lich King: He enjoys the service of many monstrous races and can always use more warm bodies, even if they are cold-blooded. Many kobold tribes have traveled from Omen and the Fangs to the Necropolis to serve, but most are never heard from again.

Orc Lord: He probably shouldn't attract as many kobolds into his service as he does. The pay is terrible, and the chances of getting killed in battle (or by an orc) are high, but still kobold tribes throw their lot in with him. Maybe they know something everybody else doesn't.

The Three: These icons are the natural choice for kobolds to serve. Kobolds revere and worship dragons with a dangerous and almost suicidal fanaticism. Of course kobolds are at the bottom of the monstrous totem pole, and get eaten by their draconic masters in frightening numbers. Most kobold dragon-cultists welcome the chance to be eaten by their gods, but others avoid it by pushing their more fervent siblings to the front of the crowd.

Themselves? Kobolds are the lowest of the low, so a few downtrodden kobolds make a rude gesture at the world and go to work for themselves. Hidden kobold cities have been rumored to exist near Cape Thunder, built directly into the Sea Wall. Whether it's weird apocalyptic cults of personality in the cellars of Santa Cora, anarcho-syndicalist communities near the Grey Towers, or even draconic self-apotheosis pyramid schemes operating in the sewers of Axis—kobolds can find ways to get themselves organized to cause trouble just about anywhere. Kobolds are usually not considered a threat and most in positions of power don't notice the growing problem until it's too late. When the kobolds do cause problems people assume that a villainous icon sent them.

Bringing kobold dog-riders into the game begs a related question: what about the dog-faced kobolds that were depicted and described in some early, middle, and late RPGs? If you love the idea of using dog-faced kobolds instead of our draconic-kobolds, go for it. Maybe the dragons treat kobolds so badly because they have a thing against dogs. Or you could phrase the two styles of kobold as rivals. Maybe the dog-faced kobolds were mostly slain and eaten by the dragons but are making a comeback. Maybe dog-faced kobolds predominated until the 13th Age and the rise of Drakkenhall. Or maybe dog-faced kobolds will be a strange new thing you'll bring in to your campaign as 'rivals' to the kobolds of the Three.

Names

Kobold names vary greatly from tribe to tribe. Some tribes just use short two-syllable given names like Wedlod, Ricdah, Oolcul, Menwas, or Hapden. Other tribes prefer more fanciful names with added titles like Chief-Trapmistress Datpedio, Spearmaster Hamfaria, Dragon-Dung Auditor Pordiffen, Underboss Cergre the Lesser, or Rechulius the Immunizer.

Dragons usually don't bother to learn kobold names, referring to them as "one of the yellow ones" or "that crunchy one." Dragons sometimes arrange their kobolds into groups like a child arranging their candy by color.

Things Kobolds Carry

Wicked sharp knife. Rope and folding grappling hook. Jar of "holy anointment spices" (a gift from a dragon?). Tiny crossbow. Stolen mining equipment. Spear. Watercress sandwiches. Long inter-tribe treaty with maps and diagrams drawn on the back. Pouch of 20 silver bits. Sling-staff. Alchemical jars. Leather armor styled to look like a dragon. Scale mail made from low-denomination coins. Small waistcoat. Over-large fancy hat. Painted leather dragon mask. Doggy treats. Carved dragon-tooth amulet. Small paper bag of honey-candy. Colorful silk bandanna in the tribe's colors. Tiny stuffed dragon doll. Lockpicks. Wyvern-skull helmet. Snakeskin trousers. Meat jerky (*probably* mutton) wrapped in a handkerchief. Bandages. Woolen kilt. Long embroidered coat of halfling design. Spicey-meaty kobold cheese. Poorly fitting helmet stuffed with cloth to keep it on the kobold's head. Picture of another kobold. Secret orders. Crowbar. Cloak the color of stone. Ring of large iron keys, none to an obvious lock. Shovel. Lantern. Iron spikes.

Kobolds can and do use magic items, and sometimes receive magic items from dragons or other patrons. Kobold magic items tend to be dragon-related in some way. Kobolds outside of Drakkenhall make use of home-made alchemical items and potions. Fumbles with such items should always have humorously bad effects.

Blast Powder (Adventurer-tier one-use item)**:** It creates noise and smoke. *Always:* Brute-force attempts to get past locked doors by blowing off their hinges or destroying the locks gain a +2 bonus. If applied wet to an arrow or spearhead ahead of combat, an attack with the weapon deals +2d4 fire damage (hit or miss the weapon is destroyed after the attack).

Potion of Minor Hurts (Adventurer-tier one-use item): A thick, sticky fluid. *Always:* As with a healing potion, you spend a recovery but only use d4s for your recovery dice. If you have no recoveries left, you only heal 1d4 hp.

Smoke Egg (Adventurer-tier one-use item): A delicate clear crystalline oval filled with sloshing liquid. *Always:* When you hurl the egg against a hard surface as a quick action, each nearby creature gains a +2 bonus to disengage checks during its next turn.

Viceroy Glue (Adventurer-tier one-use item): Sticky goo in a clay pot. *Always:* As a quick action, each nearby creature takes a –2 penalty to disengage checks until they successfully disengage or until the end of the battle. Out of combat, it can be used to quickly stick inanimate objects together for 2d4 hours; the bond is strong but can be forced apart.

Adventure Hooks

Civil War—The local kobold king is dead and the population has erupted into civil war. Now kobolds are pouring out of cellars and tree stumps, and there are running battles in the streets! Nobody knew there were so many kobolds living secretly right under their feet, and now innocents are getting caught in the crossfire.

Start the Presses—A kobold grand trap-master has invented a printing press and the local kobolds have decided to go into honest business printing periodicals. Can the local population survive the "peaceful" wolf-tribe kobolds now strutting around the streets?

Toll Bridge—Kobolds have taken over a bridge and built a fort around it, and are demanding that travelers pay a toll to cross the bridge. Surprisingly, they built it in a place that isn't easy to get around.

Underminers—Kobolds have broken through into a dwarf mine, causing cave-ins and the deaths of some miners. The dwarves have something the kobolds want, and the kobolds are stopping at nothing to get it. The Dwarf King has offered a bounty on kobold ears in the region!

Trapster

Creatures adept at making traps have the *trapster* ability. When a creature makes a *trapster* attack and rolls a natural attack roll that is higher than the target's Wisdom, the creature has maneuvered the target into a trap with the attack. A creature can only be subjected to one trap per round.

Kobold Traps

When a kobold triggers its *trapster* ability, first determine the damage the trap deals, and then roll a d6 for the terrain type the battle is occurring in to see what type of trap it is. Kobolds save their best traps for when things get dicey, so as a battle escalates, so does trap damage.

To determine trap damage, roll 1d4 and add the escalation die. If there's a dungeon-shaman in the battle, use a d8 instead of a d4.

Ongoing Damage

Kobold traps can deal ongoing damage to the target instead of regular damage, if that makes sense for the trap. For ongoing damage, roll 1d4 (or 1d8) plus the escalation die, and then subtract one (minimum 1).

Conditions

Kobold traps can impose conditions upon the target, if you choose. Roll normal trap damage, but the trap only deals half damage (minimum 1). Then roll a d4 for the condition the trap imposes upon the target until the end of its next turn.

1. The target is stuck.
2. The target is hampered.
3. The target is dazed.
4. The target is vulnerable.

Location/Type of Trap

Dragonic temple/Kobold-infested building

1. False ceiling conceals bags full of snakes, spiders, and scorpions.
2. Heavy objects on ropes swing down from the ceiling at head height.
3. Clear slick fluid over the floor, very slippery.
4. Tripwire-activated concealed billows cover target with oil, spring-loaded lit candle shoots up out of hatch in the floor.
5. Knife blades shoot out of wall, probably aimed at crotches and faces.
6. Floorboard smacks target in the face when they step on it.

Kobold-infested dwarf mine tunnels/Underneath a frontier orcish fort

1. Fake rock explodes.
2. Deadfall (falling rock trap).
3. Tripwire and concealed pit.
4. Fake wall props slam together.
5. Dagger blades fall from the ceiling.
6. Acid bladders disguised as rocks, burst when stepped upon.

Forest/Kobold-infested farmland/Fallback position near a kobold camp

1. Snares hidden underfoot.
2. Nooses drop from trees, then whip away pulled by bent saplings.
3. Log from undergrowth launched via counterweight system.
4. Bear-trap.
5. Concealed spike-lined pit.
6. Hornet's nest on a spring.

Worked stone tunnel/Dungeon/Sewer/ Inside ruins

1. Spring-loaded floor tile, flings creatures into the ceiling.
2. Hidden chute, target falls into it.
3. Floor tile is fake, bear-trap underneath.
4. Wall has a tiny hidden door that disgorges marbles.
5. The ceiling conceals an oil-and-flame trap.
6. Razor-sharp blades shoot out from between masonry.

Prince's Own Luck

Perhaps some kobold traps have had help with their construction, being icon inspired. If you want *trapster* traps to have a little more kick, consider using the following option with a *13th Age* icon die (or use a d12 where you assign each icon to one of the numbers).

First, the Priestess isn't the trappy type, so her icon will represent the Prince of Shadows. When a *trapster* trap triggers, roll the icon die. If the Prince comes up, the trap is especially clever and deals double damage. Alternately, you could just say that each of the villainous icons (Diabolist, Lich King, Orc Lord, The Three) actually counts for the Prince this way to increase the odds of it being an iconic trap.

Another option is to count the Elf Queen and Dwarf King as a Prince result, with the heroic icons having no additional result, and a villainous icons result meaning that the trap effect is flavored toward those icons. Options abound.

Natural rock tunnel/Cavern/Cave

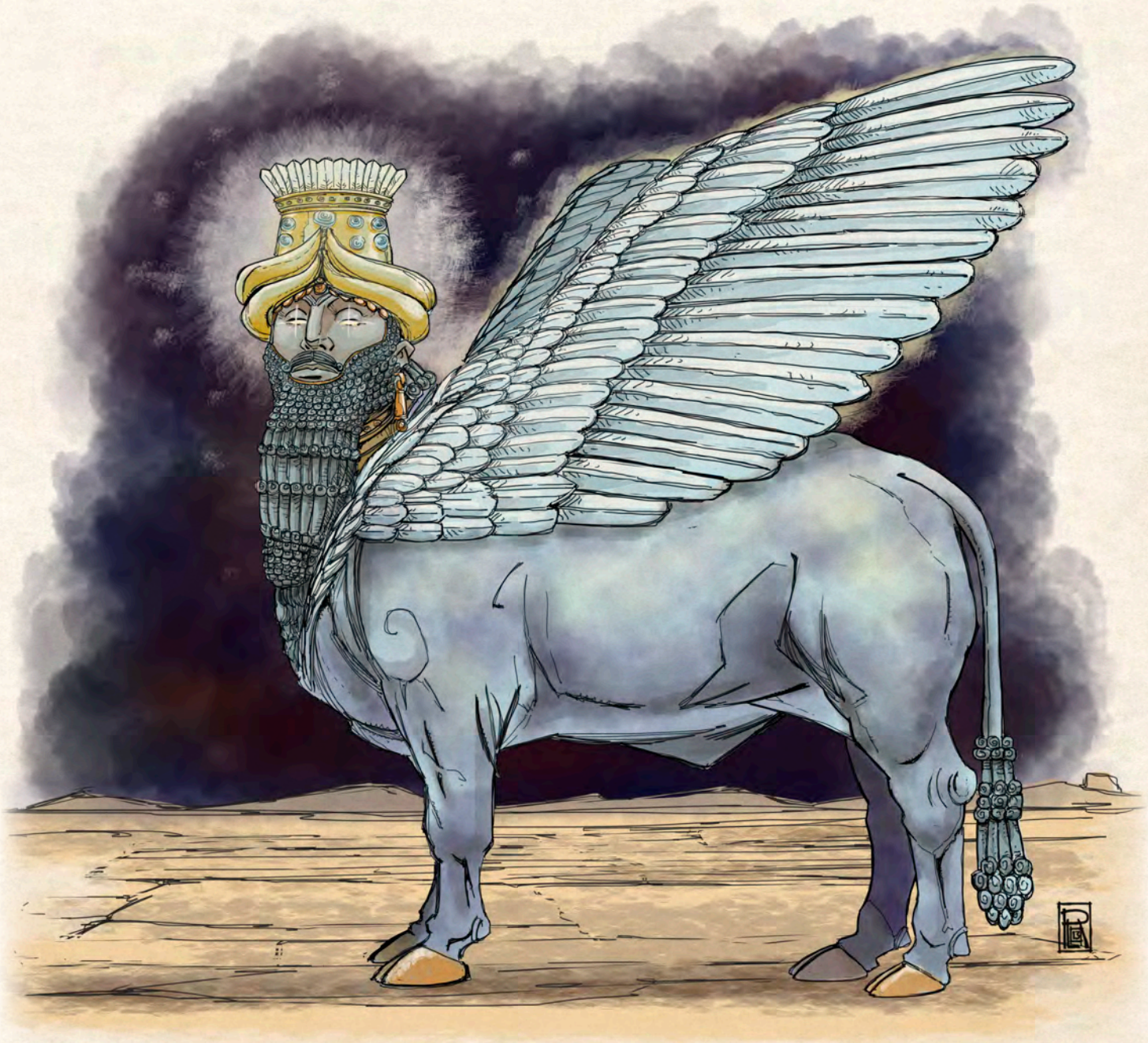
1. Deadfall (falling rock trap).
2. Barbed spikes on the floor and wall hidden by a rock-colored cloth.
3. Spring-loaded darts concealed in a crack in the rock.
4. Strategically polished and oiled floor.
5. Hidden clockwork crossbow under a rock-colored cloth.
6. Hidden pit trap.

Mountainside/Rocky desert/Open air ruins

1. Triggered mini avalanche.
2. Spring-loaded spiked board hidden under dirt slams into target's face.
3. Area laced with small explosives.
4. Hidden bellows full of dust, tripwire activated.
5. Exploding bladders of slippery oil hidden underfoot.
6. Foot-sized pit of acid concealed under a rock-colored sheet.

LAMMASU

Lammasu are massive beasts with the body of a huge bull, the wings of an eagle, the regal head of a bearded man, and the self-image of a god.



Near-immortal Guardians

Lammasu prefer to dwell in the radiant sun and pure storms of the overworld. They claim to detest being "trapped" inside mortal-made structures or underground. Nevertheless, as a mark of devotion and godlike responsibility, they often allow themselves to be bound as guardians into a palace, temple, or utterly magnificent house. They're prejudiced toward "significant" architecture of the world below: dolmens and groves and forests don't do much for them.

For All Lammasu

All lammasu have the following three abilities:

Flight: All lammasu fly. Warrior lammasu fly with upright dignity, sometimes a bit slower than is wise. Fallen lammasu fly well enough to keep up with all but the quickest demons. Lammasu wizards and priests fly more gracefully than the warriors, but only because they're less eager to run into things.

Minor servitors: When a lammasu isn't in combat or resting in stone-form, it's usually surrounded by a fawning retinue of spirit servants. The servants look like people from ages the world no longer remembers. They stick close to the lammasu, seldom or never speak, and in truth may be a projection of the lammasu's spirit or will. The spirits are no use in combat, but they can manipulate small objects such as combs and scented perfumes to use upon the lammasu's beard, hair, and jewelry.

Stone rest: Outside the overworld, lammasu who wish to rest can transform themselves into solid stone. A lammasu can see and hear as if it were still made of flesh. It can change back to flesh as a free action, but must wait a day before returning to stone, which is no great delay for lammasu guardians whose positions extend for decades or centuries. Considering that many sculptors carve stone lammasu to place in front of or within important structures, it's deliberately difficult for a thief or assassin to know whether he is facing a stone statue or a transformed beast.

Note that this form of solid stone is different from the living stone form sometimes adopted by the lammasu warrior, wizard, and priest during battle.

Lammasu Warrior

Lammasu of the warrior caste delight in using their raw and ferocious power.

Large 7th level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +10

Hooves +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—28 damage, and the lammasu can pop free from the target

Natural even hit or miss while the warrior is staggered: The target is hampered (save ends).

Roaring impact +12 vs. PD—35 damage, and 1d4 nearby enemies each take 2d10 thunder damage

Miss: 1d4 nearby enemies each take 2d6 thunder damage.

Limited use: The lammasu warrior can make this attack only when it starts its turn flying and unengaged. It engages the target as it lands and ends its turn on the ground.

Refuge of stone: When the lammasu fails a save, it becomes a creature of living stone until the end of its next turn. While made of living stone, the lammasu warrior gains *resist damage 16+* to all attacks against AC and PD. If it's flying when it becomes living stone, its magic allows it to remain in the air if it wishes.

Nastier Specials

On the crusade: When an enemy misses the lammasu warrior with a melee attack, that enemy takes 2d10 damage from the lammasu's Crusader-forged spiked armor.

AC 23
PD 20 **HP 220**
MD 17

Fallen Lammasu

Where a prideful but good heart once beat, the fallen lammasu has a demonic vessel of rage and hatred. When you see a slain creature and think, "That death was crueler than it needed to be," a fallen lammasu was probably responsible.

Large 7th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +11

Fiery hoof +12 vs. AC—30 damage

Natural even hit: The target takes 20 ongoing fire damage.

Natural odd hit: The fallen lammasu can make a second *fiery hoof* attack (but not a third) as a free action.

R: Rain of hellfire +11 vs. PD (1d4 random nearby creatures)—20 fire damage

Natural even hit against an ally: The target takes 10 ongoing fire damage instead of 20 fire damage, and until that ally saves against that damage, it adds the escalation die to its attacks.

Natural even hit against an enemy: The target also takes 15 ongoing fire damage.

Blessing of hellfire: When the fallen lammasu fails a save against an effect created by an enemy, each enemy engaged with it takes 3d10 fire damage.

Nastier Specials

Curse of the fallen: The lammasu gains an *Abyssal curse* attack.

C: Abyssal curse +12 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—The target takes 10 ongoing negative energy damage each time the fallen lammasu hits it with an attack (hard save ends, 16+)

Limited use: When the escalation die is odd, as a quick action (once per round).

The fire that burns: When the fallen lammasu makes an attack that deals fire damage and the attack roll beats the target's fire resistance, the target loses its fire resistance until the end of the battle.

AC 22
PD 16 **HP 205**
MD 21

Lammasu Wizard

It's hard to imagine a snottier-than-normal lammasu, but that's what you've got in lammasu of the wizard caste: esoteric conceit and no respect for souls incapable of spellcasting. Not much respect for lesser spellcasters, either, to tell the truth.

Large 8th level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +14

Disdainful hoof +12 vs. AC—60 damage

R: Perfect energy sphere +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—40 damage of an energy type of the lammasu's choice: cold, fire, lightning, or thunder
Natural 18+: The target can't cast spells (easy save ends, 6+).

C: Superior words of power +13 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—65 psychic damage
Natural even hit: One spell or effect created by the target this battle is canceled (lammasu's choice).

[Special trigger] **C: Master wizard's rejoinder +12 vs. MD (one enemy spellcaster)**—30 damage, the triggering attack misses and has no effect against the lammasu wizard, and the target is hampered (save ends)
Limited use: 1/round, as an interrupt action when an enemy attacks the lammasu wizard with a spell and rolls a natural odd attack roll.

Refuge of stone: When the lammasu fails a save, it becomes a creature of living stone until the end of its next turn. While made of living stone, the lammasu wizard gains *resist damage 16+* to all attacks against AC and PD. If it's flying when it becomes living stone, its magic allows it to remain in the air if it wishes.

AC	**22**	
PD	18	**HP 275**
MD	23	

Lammasu Priest

They know they are the hand-picked servants of the gods, even if the gods haven't exactly confirmed it.

Large 9th level caster [BEAST]
Initiative: +13

Hooves of command +14 vs. AC (2 attacks)—40 damage, and the target can't attack the lammasu priest until the end of its next turn

R: Righteous ray of faith +13 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—80 holy damage
Natural 16+: The lammasu priest can make a *righteous ray of faith* attack against a different target.

C: Judgment of the lammasu +14 vs. MD (each nearby conscious enemy that's staggered)—50 holy damage
Natural even miss: Half damage.
Limited use: 2/battle.

Invocation of the world unseen: Once per battle, the lammasu priest can make this invocation as a quick action. At the start of each of the lammasu priest's turns until the roll succeeds, roll a d4. If the roll is less than or equal to the escalation die, each nearby enemy is hampered (easy save ends, 6+).

Invocation of the highest court: Once per battle, the lammasu priest can make this invocation as a quick action if it has used *invocation of the world unseen*. At the start of each of the lammasu priest's turns, roll a d8. If the roll is less than or equal to the escalation die, the lammasu can make an *overworld's rebuke* attack as a free action that turn.
[Special trigger] **C: Overworld's rebuke +13 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—25 holy or lightning damage, and the target can't move to engage an enemy until the end of its next turn (it can move if it doesn't engage)
Natural even miss: Half damage.

Refuge of stone: When the lammasu fails a save, it becomes a creature of living stone until the end of its next turn. While made of living stone, the lammasu wizard gains *resist damage 16+* to all attacks against AC and PD. If it's flying when it becomes living stone, its magic allows it to remain in the air if it wishes.

AC	**25**	
PD	17	**HP 330**
MD	23	

Building Battles

Lammasu are no fools, but they're typically filled with an inflated sense of their own importance, and that makes them overconfident. They prefer to attack alongside allies who are of a lower social status than they are, assuming of course that those allies pay the lammasu sufficient deference. Other than the lammasu warrior, which delights in physical combat, lammasu will engage in melee only if given no other reasonable choice. While its allies attack from the ground, a lammasu will soar overhead and attack from prudent safety.

As you can see from the icon relations section below, lammasu frequently work alongside the forces of icons they have agreed to serve as guardians. They have standards and are notably cavalier in their treatment of mooks, who barely register to them even when they are ostensibly allies.

Fallen lammasu are less discerning. They lead packs of bloodthirsty minotaurs and often act as "counselors" to the worst groups of centaur raiders. Even when not serving the Diabolist directly, fallen lammasu consort with all types of demons, especially packs of mooks who show them grudging respect—the demons create carnage on the ground while the lammasu deals it from above.

No lammasu, even the fallen, will work with a manticore. If you have to ask why not, don't ask a lammasu.

Maintaining Appearances

Even fallen lammasu are enormously fastidious about their appearance, with thick beards kept in oiled ringlets and perfumed hair, all maintained by their servitors. Body coloration is usually bull-like, from pure and shining white to deep blood red to glossy black. Lammasu tails are braided with shimmering jade beads that contrast beautifully with their coat. Wing feathers are often a contrasting and striking metallic color, the golden hue of late afternoon sunlight on wheat or the deep rich bluish-silver of the ocean in moonlight.

Lammasu prefer to wear the most regal and dignified of crowns and jewelry, and they gladly accept such items as gifts for favors given. Each item a lammasu wears has a story attached to it, and the creatures have been known to talk half the night in iambic pentameter when asked to recount their jewelry's history. A lammasu that flees battle may be thinking of the survival of its collection as much or more than its own survival—its next gem is certain to gain a name such as Pearl of Vengeance as the lammasu works to erase its shame at having fled.

Lammasu and the Icons

If treated respectfully and presented with gifts, lammasu are amenable to being recruited by the representatives of almost any icon. A lammasu will forego treasure and reject such offers, however, if it considers the exchange with the mortal to be socially embarrassing.

Archmage: With a natural affinity for magic and a natural place in the overworld, it's no surprise that lammasu work for (they'd say "alongside") the Archmage more often than not. They will carry diplomatic pronouncements, investigate rumors of new spells, and occasionally even guard the towers of particularly notable wizards.

Crusader: Of the three major lammasu castes, lammasu warriors are most likely to serve the Crusader. His puissance strikes a chord with them.

Diabolist: The only lammasu who serve the Diabolist are the fallen. Unlike demons, they're not necessarily driven by rage and hatred every moment of every century. When a lammasu visits with a "diplomatic" message from the Diabolist, it's best to treat the messenger with respect.

Dwarf King: While lammasu detest the confining nature of the underworld, the Dwarf King's magnificent treasure (jewelry) can occasionally tempt them into agreeing to guard a pathway in the deeps.

Elf Queen: She favors lammasu for their regal nature and their command of the arcane arts. Lammasu wizards sometimes profess to love her, although whether that's literal or a metaphor is best not explored.

Priestess: It's no coincidence that priest-caste lammasu guard the entrances to so many cathedrals and temples. The Priestess is considered a high-prestige employer, and lammasu occasionally compete to be able to serve her interests.

Names

Lammasu names represent memories that the creature is particularly proud of. Names are typically three parts, consisting of a number, an adjective, and a noun. A fallen lammasu might be named Four Twitching Torsos, for instance, while a lammasu warrior might choose the name Nine Shining Crowns. They usually consider it tacky, however, to use the number of the age as part of their name.

Adventure Hooks

Unless the heroes are exploring the overworld and stumble into a lammasu's personal palace, lammasu are typically encountered on a mission for an icon or in their role as a structure's guardian. As devout vegetarians (except for fallen lammasu, who love nothing more than tearing into a steaming, still-beating heart), they aren't typically on the hunt, though their desire to acquire treasure is stronger than that of most creatures except dragons and dwarves.

Divine Sanction—A divine lammasu is sent from the Priestess to demand that a temple to a lesser god be demolished because it stands on ground that is holy to the Gods of Light. The local priest appeals to the heroes to intercede, hoping to avoid outright war between his small church and an icon. While it waits, the lammasu diplomat has planted itself in front of the church's front door and has turned to stone. Can the PCs find a solution that doesn't involve bloodshed?

Guardian on the Doorstep—A pair of crafty fallen lammasu have been signed into service by a young arcanist too foolish to know better when making a contract. Now his family's mansion is guarded by two monstrosities who attempt to eat any non-demon who enters, and the property has become overrun by Diabolist followers who are seeking a refuge from persecution. The arcanist is politically important, but not for long if word gets out of this blunder. Can the heroes help?

The Curse of the Unkempt Lammasu—Lammasu are fastidious in their grooming, thanks to their servitor spirits. When a noble lammasu is cursed with filth and disease, it begins to lose control of its pride and its sanity. The heroes must stop the creature from laying waste to a nearby town without slaying it, and must unravel the reason for the curse in order to reverse it.

The Obnoxious Diplomat—A lammasu working for the Elf Queen has been tasked with a particularly tricky bit of diplomacy, convincing one of the Crusader's generals to find a spot other than a sacred forest to have a showdown with Erranthu, a massive demon brought forth by the Diabolist. The stakes are high, and the surprisingly self-aware lammasu doesn't actually think it's up to the challenge. It asks the PCs to assist in uncovering the inevitable lies and treachery surrounding the Crusader's camp and the demon's enclave, either by force of arms or cleverness of wit. It hopes they find a solution that doesn't involve leveling the forest in the inevitable conflict.

Lich

The best thing you can say about liches is that they won't trouble you in a graveyard. Because that would be common.

The Undying Peerage

When a creature uses magic, particularly arcane magic, to extend their life unnaturally, they often become a lich. Most liches are former wizards who turn themselves into undead creatures to continue their pursuits after a lifelong study of magic. The new lich creates a phylactery—a relic imbued with its essential life force. If the lich's body is destroyed, it slowly reforms near the phylactery over a period of days. To truly kill a lich, you must destroy its phylactery first. Until that happens, the phylactery collects arcane power, allowing the lich to do as it pleases, in search of whatever mad desires drove it to live forever.

Since the ascension of the Lich King, the process of lichdom has generated a community that refers to itself as the Undying Peerage. Undeath is long, and a shadow court celebrating its icon's right to rule empowers liches as well as providing them with a focus for their intrigues.

Upon first achieving immortality, the title of baron or baroness is bequeathed onto the lich. These liches become the pawns of their elder statesmen, but they are usually still seeking whatever goals they had while they were still breathing. They are also the most likely type of liches to be in isolated areas, lording over a hideous old castle or half-functioning laboratory.

Counts and countesses gain their title by acting in the interests of the Lich King. It may be by accident, or it may be a deliberate move to curry favor with the icon. They are usually fully vested in the intrigues of the Peerage, and plot, scheme, and jostle for position with one another. Many icons often try to use these liches in their favor, or to weaken the Lich King. Counts and countesses also control more civilized and influential areas, often using lesser liches to test their minions and destroy interlopers.

To become a prince or princess of the Peerage, the lich pledges unflappable loyalty to the Lich King. Part of the pledge includes either disclosing the location of their phylactery to the Lich King or delivering it to the icon personally. Their hope in giving the icon this leverage is that they will be able to take the place of the Lich King should he ever fall. A foolish dream, but liches are incredibly smart rather than incredibly wise.

The Fine Art of Phylactery

The most common phylactery is an item that was important to the lich in life. Many phylacteries are small and fragile. The advantage of such items is their ease of concealment. If it's a small charm given by the lich's first true love, it can be hidden inside a trap-laden sarcophagus. If the phylactery is larger, such as a painting, the lich will likely have an art gallery where the phylactery hides in plain sight. Or perhaps the stone statue of the lich's mother is more than just a memento among a gallery of similar stonework.

Physical locations are also possible choices for a phylactery. An ancestral castle, a wrecked pirate ship, or a stone tower covered in runes could all serve as the home to a lich's essence. Often, liches that choose a location are bound within its borders, or the borders of the land within its influence. These locations are stocked with plenty of guardians for protection as well as minions that handle the lich's business outside the walls. The destruction of the building or structure is the only way to be sure the lich will never return. Killing a lich is hard enough, but also destroying its entire lair is definitely a job for heroes.

Living creatures might also be used as phylacteries. The lich kills off all of its blood relatives and performs a ritual on the last member of its bloodline, who becomes the phylactery. Or perhaps it chooses a bride or a groom and installs a part of itself inside its chosen victim. This option does have one drawback, however, because it forces the lich to perform the ritual every few decades as the living vessel dies. But it also poses a challenge for those looking to slay the lich beyond finding the phylactery. Is destroying the lich worth the murder of an innocent teenage girl, or a young child? Perhaps the living phylactery is completely unaware of its link to the lich. What if that link was to one of the heroes?

Lich Baroness

Her skin is like cracked porcelain. Her dress is covered in cobwebs and grave dirt. She moves with a lovely grace that would be mesmerizing, except her laugh makes is clear that she is ready to kill you.

4th level spoiler [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +6

Crystal scepter +9 vs. AC—12 damage
Natural even hit: The target is dazed (save ends).

R: Soul blast +9 vs. PD—10 negative energy damage, and 5 ongoing psychic damage (hard save ends, 16+)

C: Shroud of souls +9 vs. MD (each enemy engaged with it)—5 psychic damage, and the target takes 10 psychic damage each time it attacks the baroness (save ends)

I drink your death save: When the lich baroness scores a critical hit, the target loses a death save until the end of the battle (effectively, it now dies after failing three death saves, and the effect is cumulative). In addition, the crit range of attacks by the lich against the target expands by the escalation die.

Immortality: When the lich drops to 0 hit points, it crumbles to dust but does not die. It begins to reform near its phylactery, taking a number of days to regain its full strength equal to its level. If the phylactery has been destroyed, the lich dies when it drops to 0 hit points.

AC	**20**	
PD	14	**HP 54**
MD	18	

Lich Count

The withered body, dressed in once-fine silk, floats inside a thrumming field of magic. It's hard to tell if he's smiling or if the death rictus has set his face that way.

Double-strength 8th level spoiler [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +11

Touch of the grave +13 vs. AC—50 cold damage, and the target is dazed (hard save ends, 16+)
Natural even hit: The target is weakened instead of dazed (hard save ends, 16+)
Miss: 25 cold damage.

R: Shadow rays +12 vs. PD (2 attacks)—35 negative energy damage
Natural 16+: The target is encased in shadows (save ends). While under the effect, it's weakened and takes 10 ongoing cold damage.

R: Empowered fireball +12 vs. PD (1d3 + 1 nearby creatures in a group)—35 fire damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage
Natural even hit: The target takes 20 ongoing fire damage instead of 10.
Miss: 15 fire damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage.
Limited use: 2/battle.

Thank you for the best ten years of your life: When the lich count scores a critical hit, the target loses a death save until the end of the battle (effectively, it now dies after failing three death saves, and the effect is cumulative). In addition, the crit range of attacks by the lich against the target expands by the escalation die and the lich heals 40 hit points.

Immortality: When the lich drops to 0 hit points, it crumbles to dust but does not die. It begins to reform near its phylactery, taking a number of days to regain its full strength equal to its level. If the phylactery has been destroyed, the lich dies when it drops to 0 hit points.

Nastier Specials

C: Look upon your doom +13 vs. MD (up to 3 nearby enemies)—The lich gains a *fear* aura against the target until the end of the battle
Fear aura: While engaged with this creature, if the target has 48 hp or fewer, it's dazed (–4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.

AC	**24**	
PD	18	**HP 240**
MD	22	

Lich Prince

The body barely moves from its gilded seat. Only the eyes seem alive, glowing with something. Power? Sorcery? Madness? All three.

Double-strength 12th level spoiler [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +17

Draining bone rod +17 vs. AC—40 damage, 60 negative energy damage, and the target is dazed (hard save ends, 16+)
Natural even hit: The target is weakened instead of dazed (hard save ends, 16+).
Miss: 40 damage.

R: Arcane blast +16 vs. PD (up to 3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—50 force damage, and the target must roll a normal save; on a failure, it loses its next move action
Natural even hit or miss: Each enemy engaged with the lich prince pops free from it as a bubble of arcane energy pushes them away.

C: Soul rend +17 vs. PD (each nearby enemy)—30 negative energy damage, and ghostly hands reach up from the ground and grab the target (as they try to pull the target's spirit out of its body)
Ghostly grasping hands: When a creature is being grabbed by the ghostly hands, it takes 30 negative energy damage at the start of its turn and must make a last gasp save. On the fourth failed last gasp save, the creature's soul is torn from it and it dies. Unconscious creatures take a –4 penalty to their last gasp saves. Note, grabbed creatures take a –5 penalty to disengage checks.
Limited use: 2/battle.

Blink and you missed it: Once per battle when an attack would hit the lich prince, the attack misses instead and the lich teleports to a nearby location it can see as a free action.

Heartstopper: When the lich prince scores a critical hit, if after taking damage the target still has hit points, it drops to 0 hp, falls unconscious, and begins making death saves. When the target saves against this effect, it regains hit points equal to the amount it had before dropping to 0 hp (after the crit damage). In addition, the crit range of attacks by the lich against the target expands by an amount equal to the escalation die and the lich heals 60 hit points.

Immortality: When the lich drops to 0 hit points, it crumbles to dust but does not die. It begins to reform near its phylactery, taking a number of days to regain its full strength equal to its level. If the phylactery has been destroyed, the lich dies when it drops to 0 hit points.

Nastier Specials

C: Look upon your doom +17 vs. MD (each enemy engaged with the lich's allies)—The lich gains a *fear* aura against the target until the end of the battle
Fear aura: While engaged with this creature, if the target has 120 hp or fewer, it's dazed (–4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.

AC	**28**	
PD	24	**HP 620**
MD	26	

Building Battles

Liches are some of the Lich King's strongest servants, and as such, they command many types of undead. Liches prefer undead allies because they know they can trust them to do as commanded (in most cases). Wights, wraiths, and other powerful undead are favored, and skeletons and zombies will do in a pinch. They tend to shy away from allying with vampires and ghouls, whose bloodlust or hunger often makes them erratic. Coming from a magical background in most cases, liches rely heavily on constructs as guardians, particularly golems. Liches will ally with living creatures, but when they do so, they usually hide their true nature with magic, and they will most likely consider those allies to be expendable in pursuit of their goals.

Liches and the Icons

Archmage: Officially the Archmage forbids the study of lichdom, except in circumstances which promise to generate new weapons against the great enemy, the Lich King. Rumors that the Archmage's agents have created "tame" liches of their own to use as targets of experimental anti-lich rituals are the type of nonsense the Lich King spreads to undermine the Empire.

Emperor: Lichdom is one of the few magical acts that is a direct contravention of Imperial law. More than one palace intrigue has hinged upon "evidence" that this-or-that courtier or noble consorted or corresponded with a lich without reporting such actions to Imperial agents.

High Druid: Liches have nothing to offer the followers of the High Druid. Perhaps because of their focus on natural lifespans and thriving habitats, some of the High Druid's followers have proven particularly skillful at sniffing out and destroying phylacteries, a skill that has earned the grudging respect of wizards and other magicians who would normally look down on the Druid's "simple" magic.

Lich King: The Lich King encourages the creation of more of his kind. He expects them to plot and scheme against him, looking to usurp his dread throne. He encourages it, because he doesn't feel threatened by them; it's easy to set these schemers against each other and there's compelling evidence that the Lich King exerts magical control over everyone who dares to become a lich. Perhaps that's because he knows the location of nearly every powerful lich's phylactery. Some accounts suggest he knows exact locations, while others say his spies in every lich's court have supplied him with "best guesses." The Lich King might be willing to give up one of his followers, but that information won't come cheap and probably can't be traced back to him.

Prince of Shadows: From the perspective of the Prince, a powerful magician who places their life essence into a single bauble or ruined keep is a powerful magician just begging to be blackmailed, manipulated, and played for a fool.

Names

Most liches retain the names they had in life, though some change their names to reflect their new lives. Barons/baronesses choose titles reflecting the concept that led them to lichdom, including: Baron of Sorrow, Viscount of Wrath, or Baroness of Blood. Counts/countesses take a title that reflects the service that brought them to the attention of the Lich King, including: Marquis of Cruelty, Earl of Assassins, or Countess of Seduction. Prince titles are awarded directly by the Lich King and reflect that lich's duties in his direct service, including: Prince of Forbidden Knowledge or Duchess of Immortality. When formally introducing themself to another member of the Undying Peerage, a lich uses its full name and title, such as Lord Byron Hexmueller, Baron of Despair, Count of Pestilence, Prince of Centuries.

Adventure Hooks

A Fractured Engagement—Two liches have decided to "marry" to unite their fiefdoms. An icon allied with the PCs is obligated to send a guest to the wedding and the adventurers are asked to serve as the entourage. What happens when one of the adventurers is framed for the destruction of the bride's phylactery?

Better Ruins & Graveyards—A treasure map that comes into the PCs' hands turns out to be a map of ruined palaces, ancient wizard's towers, and other self-important architectural relics. It may not be clear at first but it's a map of locations that members of the Undying Peerage consider worth visiting, at least once, and the PCs get to figure out how to use the information or whether holding the map will be used against them.

Teacher's Error—Upon going through a mentor's papers after her death, one of the PCs discovers a dirty secret. She created a lich under duress. The good news is that the mentor left clues to the location of the lich's phylactery. The bad news is that the lich now knows the PC knows about it and where its phylactery is.

Useful Foes—One of the princes lied to the Lich King about the location of his phylactery. The prince must pay for his betrayal with his existence. Perhaps this is a job for "heroes" to solve? The Lich King's lieutenants find a way to direct the PCs, with or without the PCs' knowledge of the ultimate source of the information they are working with. With luck the PCs will kill the prince, track him to his phylactery, and kill him again by destroying it. The icon will aid in this process, letting the characters keep whatever magical items they gain on the quest. Of course, he will also let the other princes know the adventurers have the means to end them. And if the prince manages to kill the heroes, well, there's always more heroes.

Manticore

With the face of a man, the body of a lion, and the tail of a scorpion, the manticore combines two of the most vicious and dangerous creatures in the world. Also, as noted, it has the body of a lion.

Many Characteristics, All Vicious

Many manticores' coloration runs toward bright colors: vermilion, heliotrope, cinnabar, henna, aparajita, hibiscus, carmine, and so forth. Others are more "naturally" colored, although the beast's "lion" segment may be spotted like a leopard, striped like a tiger, or coal-black like a panther. The mane may be full, piled in the back of the neck, or concentrated on the jaws, chest, and throat like a hyena. Not all manticores have manes; "maneless" types vary from sleek cat-like fur to a fringe of beard running all around their head. Some coursing manticores have white (or cerulean) fur on their bellies, the better to blend in with the sky when seen from below. Its human face, of course, may be of any color, and isn't restricted to the natural hues of human skin.

The most salient features of the manticore, especially to its would-be prey, are the triple rows of teeth in both its upper and lower jaw. Survivors also frequently mention the manticore's musical voice and pleasantly spicy smell. The latter, sadly, is often masked by the rotting flesh littering the manticore's den, or stuck between those triple rows of teeth.

"Varieties of manticores include: mantichora, marticore, mantiserra, martiser, mantigere, martiore, mantikumhar, maricomorion, and mandevaur. Ensure the correct name is engraved upon your summoning drone-pipe."

—Dulin son of Domin

Manticore Bard

The classical authorities are divided regarding the manticore's voice. Does it sound more like a silver trumpet, or more like a chorus of brazen flutes? Until a trained musician survives a manticore attack, we may never know for sure.

Large 5th level caster [BEAST]
Initiative: +12

Battering paws +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—18 damage
Natural 16+: The manticore can make a single *volley of tail spikes* attack (one attack roll) against a different target as a free action without taking an opportunity attack.

Crushing leonine jaws +10 vs. AC—30 damage, or 40 damage against a creature taking ongoing poison damage

C: Musical voice +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—20 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (hard save ends, 16+)
Natural 16+: In addition, the target can't use the escalation die until it saves.
Intermittent song: The manticore can use *musical voice* only 1d4 times during the battle, and never two turns in a row.

R: Volley of tail spikes +11 vs. AC (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—5 ongoing poison damage (hard save ends, 16+)

Poison reservoirs: Each time the manticore uses its *volley of tail spikes* attack, it takes 1d6 damage, or 2d6 damage if it's staggered.

Nastier Specials
Battle music: The manticore has songs for many different purposes. When the manticore makes a *musical voice* attack and rolls a natural even hit, choose one song (or roll a d4):

1: Fortissimo—Each of the manticore's allies gains a +2d6 damage bonus with attacks that hit until the end of the battle (non-cumulative).

2: Profundo—The manticore's *musical voice* attack now deals 40 psychic damage instead of 20 until the end of the battle.

3: Furioso—The target is confused instead of dazed.

4: Largo—The manticore can make a *musical voice* attack during its next turn as a free action, but with a +3 attack bonus. This free attack won't trigger another *battle music* effect.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 150**
MD	15	

Mantikumhar

If you had enormous pincer claws and chitinous armor plates on your lion body, antennae on your naked human face, and snake scales on your scorpion tail, you'd hide under the sand too.

Large 5th level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +14

Pincer claws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)—18 damage
Natural 16+: The mantikumhar pulls its target under the soil/ground. The target is stuck, hampered, and takes 5 ongoing damage from suffocation (save ends all)
Miss: The target must roll an immediate save; on a failure, it's dazed until the end of its next turn from dirt or sand thrown in its face

Crushing leonine jaws +10 vs. AC—30 damage, or 40 damage against a creature taking ongoing poison damage

C: Serpent sting +12 vs. AC—10 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage (hard save ends, 16+)

Burrowing: The mantikumhar can move rapidly through sand, loose soil, or dry eroded earth. It prefers to dig out a wide pit and lie in wait for prey. (See burrow rules on page 200 of the *13th Age* core rulebook.)

Can't be blinded: Between nictitating membranes that keep its eyes from being scratched out by the sand and its weird burrowing echolocation sense, the mantikumhar can't be blinded.

Poison reservoirs: Each time the mantikumhar uses its *serpent sting* attack, it takes 1d6 damage, or 2d6 damage if it's staggered.

Nastier Specials
Hunker down: A mantikumhar can burrow into the soil as a move action, concealing itself from attacks. A hunkered mantikumhar gains a +3 bonus to AC and PD, but it can't use *crushing leonine jaws*.

Sand ambush: The mantikumhar's extensible tail can strike by surprise like a cobra from anywhere in its pit.

C: Serpent sting +15 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)—10 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage (hard save ends, 16+)

AC	**23**	
PD	19	**HP 119**
MD	15	

"The perfume of the manticore, properly distilled, can compel any man to unbridled lust. Not particularly difficult, I grant, but still, worth a gold imperial or five. Now, sphinx perfume, on the other hand. . . ."

—Giles of Sherbourne, navigator-duelist

Coursing Manticore

Because that's what was really missing from the manticore. The ability to silently follow you from the skies.

Large 6th level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +13

Battering paws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)—20 damage
Natural 16+: The manticore can make a *scorpion sting* attack against a different target as a free action.

Crushing leonine jaws +11 vs. AC—30 damage, or 50 damage against a creature taking ongoing poison damage

C: Scorpion sting +13 vs. AC—10 damage, and 5 ongoing poison damage (hard save ends, 16+)

Fly-by attack: While flying, the manticore can make a *scorpion sting* attack, pop free from the target, and keep flying to somewhere nearby.

Flight: Giant batlike dragon wings put the final horrid touch on the coursing manticore's "everything awful" design aesthetic.

Poison reservoirs: Each time the manticore uses its *scorpion sting* attack, it takes 1d6 damage, or 2d6 damage if it's staggered.

Nastier Specials
Aerial archer: Instead of a scorpion tail, the manticore has a spiked tail full of quills and can make *volley of tail spikes* attacks instead of *scorpion sting* attacks.
R: Volley of tail spikes +13 vs. AC (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—5 ongoing poison damage (hard save ends, 16+)

Diving leap: The manticore leaps toward its prey, using its wings to arrow into battle at tremendous speed. During its first turn only, add +6 to its initiative count. After that, the beast returns to its normal initiative order.

AC	**23**	
PD	21	**HP 170**
MD	15	

Building Battles

If alone, manticores try to flee once staggered unless victory is clearly within their jaws. They're no braver than they have to be. Manticores on a mission for a feared lord will carry it out implacably, however, even if it means their death.

Coursing manticores track their prey from the air until their foe is tired, wounded, off-guard, or at least out in the open. Battles with coursing manticores most often begin with an ambush and a diving leap by the creature.

As noted above, the mantikumhar is most likely encountered in its pit. Kobolds, goblins, or other bottom-feeding races sometimes drive or chase strangers toward a mantikumhar pit in the hopes of getting the leftover armor, weapons, and other inedible goods.

Manticores make good if occasionally impulsive lieutenants for less ethically picky power players. If the manticore has direct subordinates or assigned mooks or troops, those creatures will be the type associated with whichever icon employs the manticore: skeletons for the Lich King, or orcs for the Orc Lord, for example.

A pride of manticores is only encountered during their mating season. At such times, they have hair-trigger tempers, ravenous appetites, and exaggerated senses of privacy.

You'll never find a manticore working with a lammasu. If you have to ask why, don't ask a manticore.

Manticores and the Icons

With their man-like intelligence and demeanor, manticores make better servants and lieutenants than savage griffins or thick-headed gargoyles (depending on your definition of "better"). While any icon might use a manticore for some cruel or evil purpose (except of course the Priestess, oh my no) there are some icons whose name or sigil comes up more often where manticores are found, discussed, or feared.

Archmage: He gets blamed for the existence of most of the strange beings in the world, and the manticore is no exception. Antisocial wizards do tend to accumulate manticores more often than do, say, antisocial blacksmiths.

Crusader: He openly uses manticores as shock troops and commanders, reveling in their combination of power and cruelty.

Diabolist: Most manticores avoid others of their kind who serve this icon. They find it difficult to ignore the persistent rumors that the Diabolist experiments on manticores to improve them or to reverse-engineer the Archmage's foundational spells. Or just because she can.

Emperor: It would be a lot easier to ignore or forget the ancient treaty granting manticores "hunting rights" in certain marches if it weren't for the occasional manticore encountered wearing the Imperial blazon and livery colors.

Prince of Shadows: What's worse for your reputation than a manticore wearing your livery? A manticore wearing your face. To his credit, if that's the correct term, the Prince doesn't bother to deny the strong family resemblance, though he will point out that only the best of manticores display Princely blood.

The Three: As triune beasts, manticores make excellent emblems for the Three. The Three usually work through dragons, but manticores themselves are more likely to exalt the Three in oaths and song than any other icon.

Names

Manticores take two names: one indecipherable pattern of musical roars and trills, and one human name. The human name usually comes from the highest-ranking person the manticore has eaten: manticores can be such snobs.

Special Terrain and Environment Effects

The mantikumhar doesn't just burrow through the sand. It digs out a pit with sharply sloping sides that crumble and fall away when unwary prey gets too close to the edge. It buries itself at the bottom of the pit, ready to pinch, sting, and devour the tumbling morsel.

A mantikumhar pit is usually around 70 feet deep and 100 feet across, depending on the soil type. If the soil is not sandy or loose, the mantikumhar digs out cavities and tunnels ready to collapse when its prey steps on them.

A mantikumhar pit resembles a normal valley between dunes, or a natural declivity in the path. Creatures must make a DC 20 skill check to notice the telltale signs of undermining or burrowing. If they fail, they fall into the pit and are immediately stuck, hampered, and take 5 ongoing damage from suffocation (save ends all). They also get ambushed by the mantikumhar.

Heroes without experience in tunneled soil (most except halflings/dwarves) or a preternaturally light step (elves) are always hampered in a mantikumhar pit. Heroes in heavy armor take a –2 attack penalty regardless of species.

It is the unfortunate fact that many of the early jurisprudential chrestomathia were misfiled, but only **Mardigoras v. Willowdell** *had a venomous stasis spider entry filed in its place. It's enough to discourage properly thorough researches of precedent."*

—Sir Gedney Ffisk-Brochten, seneschal-at-law and equerry-at-large

Adventure Hooks

All varieties of manticores are generally solitary, dwelling in the wasteland on the fringes of humanoid settlement. This is often, admittedly, because the manticore has killed and eaten all the nearby settlers.

When encountered in the wild, the manticore is either napping, idly chewing its most recent kill, or trying to kill you. A manticore on a mission, or one employed by an icon or other facet of society, may be engaged in research: trading songs with a siren, studying a magical artifact, or torturing someone who it suspects knows something relevant to its inquiries. Such manticores may also have magic items, mostly of the necklace, pendant, or headgear sort.

Manticores are usually polite and well-spoken at first, even if they believe they can kill you. They do not take contradiction or resistance well, however, and can fly into maniacal rants and rages for little or no reason.

Back to All Three Natures—A manticore formerly in Imperial service has traveled to the Queen's Wood and recruited a band of followers, including human archers, some wood elves, and a pride of semi-tame lions. Rumor has it they are a druidic cult with rituals that include snake handling and wild, Maenadic hunts. They prey on over-powerful devotees of the Priestess, Archmage, and Elf Queen and distribute their victims' gold to the poor humanoids on the forest's verges, winning themselves allies and converts.

Claim that Tune—A wizard needs the song of a manticore for a specific ritual. One wrinkle: the manticore in question must be alive when the wizard finishes her incantation. The heroes must go find a manticore, hear its song, and get away without killing it (or being killed). If the heroes have no bard with them, she sends along her nephew, who has perfect pitch but no other particularly helpful qualities.

How Like a Serpent's Tooth—The toxin in a series of poisonings in Glitterhaegen has been identified (perhaps by the heroes) as manticore venom. Somewhere in that bustling, prosperous city, someone has hidden a manticore. Or perhaps, a manticore has taken over a criminal ring or local assassins' guild? Either way, the heroes' future likely holds a lot of searches of a lot of cellars.

Naga

Naga aren't unreasoning monsters. They generally have perfectly sound reasons for wanting intruders dead. Interactions where they're willing to talk with two-legged mortals are also troubled by the fact that the nagas' arrogance and condescension mean you will soon want them dead.

manafang naga

Deadly Guardians of the Arcane Arts

Nagas are large snakes with faces that mirror those of the more well-known races, but they don't have arms or legs. There are at least three known species of nagas, but all share one common trait: they are sustained by magical energy rather than food and water. They don't need to consume that energy to subsist, however, and some believe the nagas actually produce the energy that also sustains them. For this reason, naga bones are a common element in enchantment rituals because their bodies retain magical energy long after the creatures die.

Nagas are to the flow of magic like fish are to the ocean. They understand the movement of the arcane currents like no others. Wizards and sorcerers may control the power, but the nagas seem to breathe that power. Even the naga life cycle testifies to their link to powers beyond the world; instead of growing larger like most beasts and dragons, nagas shrink as they "shed reality" and become more purely magic. Elder nagas are about the size of humans and elves instead of the great snake-like bulk of the younger creatures.

One of the nagas' biggest mysteries is their creation. Some legends about the pursuit of magic offer the naga as a cautionary tale. It's often accepted that too much time spent consulting ancient tomes eventually warps the body as well as the mind. The pursuit of knowledge can lead to breaking off relationships, changes to mind and body, and hoarding magical items. So perhaps nagas were created from obsessives who wore their magical items while they slept and spellcasters who never let enchantments end naturally. Of course, nagas spit on such notions. . . .

Other versions of their origins suggest nagas choose to shed their original bodies. The humanoid form can only conduct so much power into spells. The naga form is able to absorb, store, and release much more arcane energy. Nagas are known to be powerful ritual casters. Compared to the things nagas can do with enough time and energy, the effects of humanoid spellcasters are mere tricks of the light and illusions to fool children. The naga know where the true power lies and are willing to sacrifice anything to achieve that power.

If they are not the result of a curse or the drive for knowledge, how are they born? There is no evidence of nests to reflect their serpentine heritage. Nagas seem ageless. "Naga eggs" sold as spell components by unscrupulous market dealers always turn out to be the eggs of other supernatural creatures marked up for the rubes. Nagas killed in battle disappear in a flash of energy. Are they reborn? Is there a limited amount of nagas in the world? Perhaps the icons know the answer to this question but haven't told anyone.

Because nagas overflow with arcane energy, those who battle them find themselves able to use spells multiple times that they normally must wait until after battle to recharge. Nagas also draw power from arcane spells used against them. This cycle turns battles with nagas into loud clashes full of mystic energies spilling all over the place. Fighting a naga without spellcasters is even more dangerous, since a naga's magical superiority builds up with the type of dramatic power surge that only true heroes usually enjoy (i.e., a naga that is not attacked with spells is a naga that is harnessing the power of the escalation die for itself and all its allies).

We could have pitted each type of naga against a specific class. For example, the swaysong naga might only have mirrored bard spells. That type of singling-out of classes generally isn't good design, mostly because monsters' cool powers often end up being irrelevant and players always know whether they've been singled out or whether the GM has wimped out by **not** *picking on them.*

Swaysong Naga

The naga sways to an unheard song, keeping time with the beat of magic. The movement is hypnotic and . . .

Large 5th level leader [BEAST]
Initiative: +8

Bite +10 vs. AC—24 damage
Natural 16+: The target also takes 15 ongoing poison damage.
Miss: 12 damage.

R: Song of reversals +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)—25 psychic damage
Natural 16+: The target is confused (save ends).
Miss: 10 psychic damage.
Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Hypnotic movements +10 vs. MD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if *mystic escalator* benefit is active)—10 psychic damage, and the target is hampered (save ends)

Arcane mirror: When an enemy targets the swaysong naga with a spell, the naga regains the use of *song of reversals* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Mystic escalator: The naga and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the naga has been targeted by an enemy's spell since its last turn.

AC	**21**	
PD	16	**HP 144**
MD	18	

"Sure, the wizards get excited at the thought of the spellbooks and artifacts that these nagas protect. But they also have libraries full of histories, carvings of emperors from previous ages, and information on previous icons. Most of it gets smashed in the fighting. But if you can bring back information for the Emperor's archives, you can live well in Axis for a few months. He really likes statuary."

—Maria Dozenfingers, halfling rogue

Sparkscale Naga

If you've spoken with a sparkscale naga and failed to feel patronized you just weren't paying attention.

Large 6th level leader [BEAST]
Initiative: +10

Bite +11 vs. AC—30 damage
Natural 16+: Each nearby enemy takes 10 thunder damage.
Miss: 20 damage.

R: Bloom of lightning +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)—30 lightning damage
Natural 16+: Each nearby enemy takes 10 thunder damage.
Miss: Each nearby creature (including allies) takes 5 thunder damage.
Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Sparking aura +10 vs. PD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if *mystic escalator* benefit is active)—20 lightning damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

Arcane mirror: When an enemy targets the sparkscale naga with a spell, the naga regains the use of *sparking aura* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Mystic escalator: The naga and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the naga has been targeted by an enemy's spell since its last turn.

AC	**21**	
PD	20	**HP 190**
MD	16	

Manafang Naga

The eyes and fangs of this naga are studded with crystals like those used in the enchantment of magic items. Which serves as a clue as to why your magic items just stopped talking with you.

Large 7th level leader [BEAST]
Initiative: +14

Bite +12 vs. AC—45 damage
Natural 16+: The naga gains *resist spell damage 16+* against the target's spells until the end of the battle.
Miss: 25 damage.

R: Force missiles (1d4 nearby or far away enemies)—25 force damage
Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Ritual movements +12 vs. MD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if *mystic escalator* benefit is active)—40 psychic damage, and the target can't cast spells or use the activated powers of true magic items (save ends)

Arcane mirror: When an enemy targets the manafang naga with a spell, the naga regains the use of *force missiles* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Mystic escalator: The naga and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the naga has been targeted by an enemy's spell since its last turn.

AC	**23**	
PD	17	**HP 210**
MD	21	

Elder Swaysong Naga

This withered creature moves slowly, almost invisibly. The subtle movements push and pull your perceptions just enough to make you wonder if you are drunk, dreaming, or already dying.

8th level leader [BEAST]
Initiative: +12

Bite +13 vs. AC—24 damage
Natural 16+: The target also takes 15 ongoing poison damage.
Miss: 12 damage.

R: Song of reversals +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)—25 psychic damage
Natural 16+: The target is confused (save ends).
Miss: 10 psychic damage.
Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Hypnotic movements +13 vs. MD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if *supreme mystic escalator* benefit is active)—15 psychic damage, and the target is hampered (save ends); until the target saves, it takes 15 psychic damage each time it attacks the naga

Arcane mirror: Whenever an enemy targets the elder swaysong naga with a spell, the naga regains the use of *song of reversals* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Supreme mystic escalator: The naga and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the naga has been hit by two enemy spells since its last turn.

AC	**24**	
PD	19	**HP 144**
MD	21	

Elder Sparkscale Naga

The air is thick with ozone. The swaying beast in front of you hisses, sizzles, and pops. Small trickles of lightning caress its scales like a lover. A jealous one.

9th level leader [BEAST]
Initiative: +15

Bite +14 vs. AC—30 damage
Natural 16+: Each nearby enemy takes 10 thunder damage.
Miss: 20 damage.

R: Bloom of lightning +14 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)—30 lightning damage
Natural 16+: Each nearby enemy takes 10 thunder damage.
Miss: Each nearby creature (including allies) takes 5 thunder damage.
Limited use: 1/battle.

C: Sparking aura +14 vs. PD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if *supreme mystic escalator* benefit is active)—40 lightning damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

Arcane mirror: Whenever an enemy targets the elder sparkscale naga with a spell, the naga regains the use of *bloom of lightning* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Supreme mystic escalator: The naga and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the naga has been hit by two enemy spells since its last turn.

AC 24
PD 23 **HP 190**
MD 19

Elder Manafang Naga

"Speak to me of these ages, fleshy one. You claim they have come and gone. Those with the First Blood in their veins see them for the illusions they are. Your icons may rise, clash, and fall like children playing at war."
—Shakaask Thilsa, manafang naga

10th level leader [BEAST]
Initiative: +18

Bite +15 vs. AC—45 damage
Natural 16+: The naga gains *resist spell damage 16+* against the target's spells until the end of the battle.
Miss: 25 damage.

R: Force missiles (1d4 nearby or far away enemies)—45 force damage
Limited use: 1/battle.

Leaders or Spoilers?

We're calling nagas leaders because if you fight them without using spells, they'll let all their allies use the escalation die. Have a proper magical blow-out with the nagas and you'll see that they operate much more like spoilers and wreckers.

C: Ritual movements +15 vs. MD (one nearby enemy, or one nearby enemy per point of esc. die if *supreme mystic escalator* benefit is active)—45 psychic damage, and the target can't cast spells or use the activated powers of true magic items (save ends)
Miss: 20 psychic damage.

Arcane mirror: Whenever an enemy targets the elder manafang naga with a spell, the naga regains the use of *force missiles* if it's expended. In addition, if that spell is a recharge spell, roll its recharge check immediately after the spell is cast. If the spell is a per-battle or daily spell, roll a hard save (16+) immediately after the spell is cast; on a success, the spellcaster doesn't expend the spell.

Supreme mystic escalator: The naga and each of its nearby allies can use the escalation die unless the naga has been hit by two enemy spells since its last turn.

AC 26
PD 20 **HP 210**
MD 24

Nastier Specials

The following ability could be used by a large naga, but it seems especially at home woven into the coils of the normal-sized elder naga. We'd recommend using it for at least one elder naga during the campaign. Giving it to all elder nagas works if you want the PCs to fear them terribly.

Arcane balance: Whenever the naga rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack roll, it can cancel one magical effect created by a spell or magic item that is affecting the naga or a nearby creature (including a beneficial effect on a PC). It can be an ongoing effect, an effect that only lasts a round, or even an effect that was supposed to last until the end of the battle. Use your sense of what is magical and what isn't: a bard's song is clearly magical, but a rogue's Shadow Walk talent probably isn't, despite the wizard's arguments that it *should* be.

"The Wyrm protects us from creatures bent on our destruction. What weapons are the Naga hiding? How many lives could we save? They are in league with the demons and are responsible for opening the rift to the Abyss. Proof? I have FAITH!"
—Nelissandro, high elf cleric

Building Battles

Nagas are plotters who surround themselves with magical power. Magical traps are common in naga lairs. They will also work with other highly magical creatures such as demons or ogre magi to help them achieve their goals, manipulating the demons as much as anyone can, and enticing the ogres with secret knowledge. Some rumors suggest they know how to create haunted skulls and always keep a few around as guardians. It has been verified by many who have battled the nagas that the creatures are fond of constructs, especially stone and iron golems who can serve as their feet and fists when needed.

Nagas and the Icons

Archmage: The Archmage's pursuit of arcane secrets puts him at odds with nagas. He wants the secrets they protect. They believe that the icon and his allies are foolish children who can't handle the power they possess and protect. The Archmage cares little for bloodshed and would prefer the knowledge kept in the nagas' libraries be copied rather than stolen. The nagas don't make that easy, however, so in the choice between looting tombs and losing spells, the Archmage chooses the former. If nagas aren't willing to deal, the Archmage does what he needs to do to advance the cause of magic.

High Druid: Although nagas claim to be masters of all the arcane arts, the nature magic of the High Druid still eludes them. The High Druid believes it's because the natural cycle of life and death does not apply to nagas; therefore, they can never understand the inherent magic of nature. The nagas claim it's because druidic magic is even less refined than other sources and not even worth their study. Naga nests rarely exist in the wild areas claimed by the High Druid. She sees these creatures as examples of civilization gone awry and treats them accordingly.

Lich King: Nagas share two pursuits with this icon: longevity and the collection of arcane knowledge. Unlike the Archmage, however, the Lich King is willing to deal with nagas. Lich phylacteries are often placed in the protection of a naga nest. Even if the nagas don't possess the Lich King's phylactery (or phylacteries), they might know what the objects are or where he keeps them. Both sides understand the pursuit of magical knowledge to a self-destructive end. Some even whisper that nagas were the true power behind the rise of the Wizard King.

Prince of Shadows: The value of arcane knowledge is obvious to the Prince of Shadows. Even the hint of some unknown spell or ritual can get nagas swaying in anticipation. Cutting a deal with a naga often leads to it making a nest around an area the Prince wants protected. The icon may also be one of the few who know the truth about the nagas' origins. So far, no other icon has offered a juicy enough secret for him to part with that information.

The Three: Nagas don't get along with the Three or their agents. The Three believe nagas were responsible for stealing their energy and creating sorcerers. Because of this, the Three attack and destroy naga nests they learn about. In return, nagas are more than happy to trade information about local dragon lairs in exchange for adventurers leaving their nests undisturbed. This is mostly a cold war between the two factions, but it occasionally spills out into open warfare. The Three are sending more and more agents into the ruins around Omen (see below) to gain some leverage on the nagas.

Five Truths About Omen

Use these rumors about nagas and the ruins of Omen as your campaign requires.

- Nagas claim the ruins near the city of Omen are theirs. Many different species in the world make similar claims. The nagas, however, seem to have an insider's knowledge of the ruins. Nests often contain maps, journals, and other writings detailing the area. These documents are valuable for those unconcerned with the hoarding of magic theory. Unfortunately for historians, the writings are from different authors and the story they tell is often contradictory. The ruins clearly exist from a time in a previous age, and the more questions answered the more chances for adventurers to discover lost treasures from a bygone era.
- Some journals claim nagas built the city that predated Omen. Omen was the first city built in the world and all the other cities that came after it were mere echoes of its greatness. Many materials and building techniques for it were created by nagas. Dwarven claims to the contrary are examples of jealousy at best and thievery at worst. In these journals, Omen is a direct descendant of the "naga city." Omen was built as a mirror of the older, greater city, and the nagas alive today find the aping of the city to be quaint.
- The nagas conquered Omen in a war many ages ago. It was the first war to use magic in battle. The nagas were the masters of this battle magic and conquered the world. Omen was their capital, but it was devastated by a huge magical accident. The nagas locked away their mighty magic. Despite their best efforts, magic escaped to the people that came to the city later. Now the nagas must protect the world from their legacy.
- The nagas lost Omen because they were too devoted to the study of magic. Nagas were a peaceful race with no standing army. They believed that their studies made them too sophisticated to make war. Instead, Omen fell due to the politics of the mage guilds and also to the first manifestation of orcs, who drove the nagas to the winds. The nagas study magic to someday return their kind to their original glory.
- The first icon of the 1st Age was a naga with the power of a god. Omen was the city it created through pure will. But a great betrayal brought it down. Some versions of the legend say the betrayal was perpetrated by a human, others suggest a member of another similar race. That age ended with the naga's death. The 2nd Age began with the naga icon's power split between two new icons. The nagas believe all the icons will one day come to Omen all at once. And the nagas will have their revenge.

"Give the snakes a wide berth. Never look them in the eyes unless you want to fight. You can make it through their dens if you move quietly, hold your tongue, and touch absolutely nothing."
—Gargilan, dark elf bard

Naga Methods of Preserving Lost Knowledge

Most spellbooks are mere books; paper, ink, and binding. The secrets of the nagas deserve better. They use much more exotic methods to preserve their knowledge. The nagas use magic to protect magic, which spurs them to discover greater magic still. Their methods also act as natural barriers to theft. An adventurer can easily stuff a grimoire into a sack and make a run for it. But if that grimoire is a two-ton elemental of iron? It's less easy.

Nagas often construct golems. They create them as intermediaries between the nagas and the rest of the world. Naga golems have spells carved into their torsos in exact, articulate script. To gain the spell, you must either defeat the golem or control it, but reading a spell tends to be difficult when the media is trying to dash out the reader's brains.

Specially attuned crystals also hold the secrets of magic that the nagas keep. The crystals impart the knowledge directly into the mind, unlike reading script. How the knowledge is created is less clear. Are they memories? The paranoid members of the magic community refuse to use naga mind crystals. Too much communing with the crystals, and they believe a naga will take the user's body over to be put to dire purpose.

Elemental libraries exist in areas where non-nagas fear to tread. Volcanoes, sea floors, cloud castles, and sheer cliffs all come naturally to nagas. Not only is the journey treacherous but the nagas are hostile. Finding the right spell on a cliffside covered in coded sigils is an adventure in itself.

Names

Nagas are given short names upon birth. For every major accomplishment, a syllable is added to their name. Names include: F'Sheol, K'Brik'Nep'Sha, Vic'Nic'Tic'Pao'Kun, Lin'Drin'Hob'Busk', and G'Rick'Sha'Bin'Hiz'Quint'Ka.

Adventure Hooks

A Bone to Pick—Rumors of a skeletal swaysong naga call to the adventurers. Is the naga the guardian of long lost necromantic spells? Or is it a ruse to lure out those who would seek dark magic?

An Icon's Need—The adventurers must heal an icon important to most of them. The affliction is something unusual like a powerful poison or spell. The only method that will work for certain is finding the pieces of a naga spell crystal to unlock lost healing knowledge.

Omen's Gate—Somewhere in the ruins of Omen is a magical gate. A week ago, it began to come to life. Only the nagas know its purpose . . . and how to stop it.

swaysong naga

OGRE

Maybe, just maybe, ogres had it better when the ogre magi ruled. But probably not.

Iconic Flavors

We've decided you don't need us to tell you ethnographic details of the ogre bloodlines, or to detail their failed attempt to storm the Golden Citadel, or even their mostly frustrated attempts to move down out of the Owl Barrens into the Wild Wood. You can handle ogre "culture" and campaign events yourself. They're ogres, not gnomish rocket engineers.

So let's cut to the melee. We presented one ogre on page 240 of the *13th Age* core book. The ogres below complement that basic ogre by registering in the service of the icons.

The ogre penitent and the ogre crusader serve the Crusader. The penitent is eminently expendable and becomes more dangerous as it takes more damage. The ogre crusader has qualified as worthy of shock troop status and can be especially effective against PCs affiliated with the Crusader's great enemies, the Diabolist and Great Gold Wyrm.

The demonic ogre serves the Diabolist by serving as the carrier for a demon's soul that is not quite strong enough to take its own form. You should express this development in ways that

work for your campaign; it could be demonic possession, it could be a strange gem worn upon the ogre's chest, or it could be a mini-demon parasite growing somewhere on the ogre's body. Let your story guide you.

The ogre berserker and the ogre champion seem most likely to fight for the Orc Lord, though the berserker could easily be a free agent. The ogre champion has a touch of magic from a great enemy of the elven and dwarven peoples, so it's probably best tied to the Orc Lord.

Ogre Penitent

A handful of ogres convert to the Crusader's view that they are fallen monsters worthy only to die for his true warriors. Kind of sad, kind of annoyingly lethal.

Large 3rd level blocker [GIANT]
Initiative: +4

Remorseful flail +6 vs. AC—20 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: Until the end of the battle, when an enemy engaged with the ogre attacks it, that enemy can't target other enemies with that attack.
Miss: Half damage to a different nearby enemy.

Closer my death to thee: While staggered, the ogre penitent gains a +4 attack bonus.

Crumbling ego: Each time the ogre fails a save, it takes 1d8 psychic damage.

Nastier Specials
Frenzied disappointment: If the ogre penitent rolls a natural 1 or 2 with an attack roll, it can take an extra standard action during its next turn.

AC 18
PD 16 **HP 100**
MD 14

Demonic Ogre

Half-formed demons possess ogres until the demons grow strong enough to assume their own forms. Unless you have a stake in increasing the world's demon population, slay these terrors quickly.

Large 4th level spoiler [GIANT]
Initiative: +8

Demon-kissed blade +9 vs. AC—24 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The ogre gains a random *demonic advantage* (see below) until the end of the battle. All demonic advantages end if the ogre experiences a demonic eruption.
Miss: Half-damage.

R: Flaming spear +9 vs. AC—20 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The target takes 10 ongoing fire damage.

Demonic advantage: Roll a d6 to determine which demonic ability the ogre gains.
1: The ogre gains *resist energy 16+*.
2: Once per battle, the ogre can teleport anywhere it can see as a move action.
3: The ogre's attacks deal +1d8 damage, hit or miss.
4: At the start of the ogre's turn, each enemy engaged with it takes 2d6 negative energy damage.
5: The ogre gains a +5 bonus to saves this battle.
6: The ogre begins making *demonic eruption* rolls when the escalation die is 4+ instead of 6+.

Demonic eruption: When the escalation die is 6+, the demonic ogre rolls a normal save at the start of each of its turns. On a success, roll a d6 and replace the demonic ogre with a new undamaged demon. 1–2: Imp; 3–4: Despoiler; 5: Frenzy demon; 6: Cambion sickle (page 31). (See the *13th Age* core rules, page 210–211 for options 1–5.)

Nastier Specials
Early eruption: Begin making *demonic eruption* rolls when the escalation die is 5+ instead of 6+. Also use stronger demons for the options that the ogre could turn into.

AC 20
PD 16 **HP 100**
MD 16

Ogre Berserker

This is not a fight you can escape without blood on your hands. And your face. And your knees, backside, and elbow joints.

Large 4th level wrecker [GIANT]
Initiative: +9

Giant axe or sword +8 vs. AC—28 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The ogre berserker gains the *escalator* ability (it adds the escalation die to its attacks) until the end of the battle.
Miss: Half damage, and the ogre berserker takes 1d6 damage.

You shouldn't have done that: When an enemy engaged with the berserker scores a critical hit against it, that enemy takes 7d6 damage.

Incidental damage: When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the berserker, hit or miss, that enemy takes 2d6 damage.

Rauguguggh: Once per battle as a free action, when the ogre berserker fails a save, it can take 3d6 damage to succeed at the save instead.

AC 18
PD 18 **HP 120**
MD 15

Ogre Crusader

Smarter ogres realize that they are bigger and tougher than most of the Crusader's warriors, and therefore deserve the good armor and some well-made weapons. The armorers have reluctantly agreed.

Large 4th level troop [GIANT]
Initiative: +6

Jagged greatsword or greataxe +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—18 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The ogre crusader can make a *war-curse* attack as a free action.
Miss: Half damage.

R: War javelin +8 vs. AC—18 damage

C: War-curse +10 vs. MD (the nearby conscious enemy with the lowest hit points)—10 psychic damage

Special hate: When the ogre crusader attacks an enemy that has a positive or conflicted relationship with either the Diabolist or the Great Gold Wyrm, it adds the escalation die to the attack roll.

AC	**21**	
PD	17	**HP 106**
MD	15	

Ogre Champion

You don't have to be an orc to be one of the Orc Lord's favored champions. Ogres like this guy make the point that you're probably better off not being an orc.

Large 5th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +10

Champion's battle-axe +10 vs. AC—30 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, or 20: The ogre champion gains a second standard action this turn, but not a third.
Miss: Half damage.

R: Heavy javelin +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—26 damage
Miss: 10 damage.

Orc Lord's enemies: Whenever a nearby dwarf or elf enemy attempts to use their racial power, they must roll a hard save (16+). On a failure, the power fails and has no effect that turn (but they can try again next turn).

Slayer of wizards: Creatures engaged with the ogre champion take opportunity attacks from it when casting close spells as if they were casting ranged spells.

Nastier Specials
Escalating danger: The ogre champion adds the escalation die to the damage it deals with its attacks, hit or miss.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 140**
MD	18	

Ogre Minion

Evil masterminds always have a place for minions who are too tough to realize when they are outclassed.

Large 9th level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +11

Ogre-sized chopper +14 vs. AC—35 damage
Miss: Half damage.

R: Ogre-sized javelin +14 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—20 damage

Incidental damage: When an enemy makes an opportunity attack against the ogre minion, hit or miss, that enemy takes 4d6 damage.

Double-strength mook: The ogre minion mook counts as two 9th level mooks when you're building battles.

Nastier Specials
Punching above its weight: Once per round, the ogre minion mob can take 5d10 damage to reroll an attack (a member of the mob takes one for the team).

AC	**24**	
PD	23	**HP 80 (mook)**
MD	19	

Mook: Kill one ogre minion mook for every 80 damage you deal to the mob.

Names

Ogres like names that boast of their martial prowess or the amount of foes they have eaten. Ogruk Toe-Eater, Drkrk Face-Swallower, and Kytdron Skull-Taker are all likely ogre names, especially for ogres without a master or ogres devoted to the Orc Lord.

Ogres devoted to the Crusader might choose names that boast about how much they hate demons.

Ogres devoted to the Diabolist actually choose simpler and less boastful names because they know they aren't the toughest kids on the block.

Adventure Hooks

Ask Not What Your Empire Can Do For You—Some soft-hands village marshal from a land under the Archmage's wards sees a legion of half-orcs for the first time so he gets the idea that if half-orcs serve the Empire so well, ogres would do even better. Foolish or con-artist PCs might be hired as his recruitment officers. Wise or responsible PCs will clean up the resulting mess.

Damned if You Do . . .—A village the PCs have ties to becomes occupied by ogre crusaders looking for a demon cult, one tortured informant at a time. The cult is real, but hidden a bit too well for the increasingly frustrated ogres' methods. How will the PCs manage the situation?

Ogres to Omen—How many ogres can you fit onto a prison barge sailing to Omen as the result of complicated negotiations between the Empire and the frost giants? As many as possible, but leave room for the PCs roped into ensuring the voyage is a "success."

OGRE MAGE

Refined and orderly minds, devoted to fostering chaos as a means of maximizing their power and advancing shadowy agendas.

Purple and Powerful

Ogre magi showed up in the earliest dungeon-crawling supplements. They were modeled on Japanese oni, though it's not clear that the original artists saw that connection as anything but great reference material. Decades of supporting roles as a first- or second-tier villain has added up to a sense that the ogre mage can be a ruthlessly evil archvillain or chief enforcer for a more powerful villain, with perhaps a trace of unexpected dignity in the evil.

We don't want to over-explain the ogre magi. Page 240 of *13th Age* core rules mentions that the elves brought the ogre magi into the Empire temporarily a few ages ago and that things went sour thanks to the dark elves. But really, isn't that what people always say? Blaming the dark elves is almost like saying "Shit happened." The truth about the ogre magi seems like something you can exploit within your campaign. We're certainly coming up with varied answers in our campaigns, so this is one monster that we'd like to leave mysterious.

Less Evasion, More Power

The ogre mage in the *13th Age* core book is somewhat baroque compared to most of our monsters. We indulged ourselves by accounting for nearly all of the ogre mage's traditional powers. This atypical thoroughness built up into a checklist of powers. But the powers didn't necessarily come together properly; if you've played with our ogre mage stats you may have noticed that they're overly defensive. Many defensive and evasive abilities don't add up to much that can actually threaten high-level PCs. Maybe that's okay. Use the core book ogre mage caster when you want a monster that can frustrate the PCs while accomplishing dastardly deeds and getting away with it, not necessarily threatening the PCs' lives.

The ogre magi below are life-takers rather than spellcasters who are trying to escape into the shadows. The ogre mage knight fights with fluid martial arts attacks in which each naginata strike flows into a powerful spell. The prismatic ogre mage unleashes world-twisting chaos effects and prismatic blasts that twist hero's lives into unexpected places.

Ogre Mage Knight

If the naginata doesn't get you then the lightning will.

Large 6th level wrecker [GIANT]
Initiative: +13

Naginata +11 vs. AC—The effect depends on the roll.
Natural even hit: 25 damage, and the ogre mage knight can use *lightning pulse* as a free action.
Natural odd hit: 20 damage, and the ogre mage knight can use *voice of thunder* as a free action.
Natural even miss: 10 damage, and the ogre mage knight can teleport to any nearby location it can see before using *magi's lightning chain* as a free action.
Natural odd miss: The ogre mage knight can use *cone of cold* as a free action.

R: Magi's lightning chain +11 vs. PD—15 lightning damage, and each time this attack has a natural even attack roll, the ogre mage knight can target a different creature with the ability

C: Cone of cold +11 vs. PD (up to 3 nearby enemies in a group, also targets the ogre's allies engaged with the targets)—20 cold damage
Miss: 10 cold damage.

C: Lightning pulse +11 vs. PD (one random nearby or far away enemy)—20 lightning damage
Natural even hit: The target is weakened (save ends).

C: Voice of thunder +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—15 thunder damage

Resist exceptional attacks 16+: When a limited attack (not an at-will attack) targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Trollish regeneration 15: While an ogre mage is damaged, its uncanny flesh heals 15 hit points at the start of the ogre mage's turn. It can regenerate five times per battle. If it heals to its maximum hit points, then that use of regeneration doesn't count against the five-use limit.

When the ogre mage is hit by an attack that deals fire or acid damage, it loses one use of its *regeneration*, and it can't regenerate during its next turn.

Dropping an ogre mage to 0 hp doesn't kill it if it has any uses of *regeneration* left.

Nastier Specials

Ki: Gain 1d4 ki at the start of each battle. Spend a point of ki as a free action, once per round, to change the ogre mage knight's natural attack result by one; a natural 1 could become a 2, a natural 19 could become a natural 20, and so on.

AC 22
PD 19 **HP 160**
MD 17

Ogre Lightning Mage

There's a disturbing amount of arcane knowledge implicit in the devastation wrought by this ogre's spells. Each lightning bolt unfolds like a flower. The bodies sizzling between the bolts seem artfully placed.

Large 8th level caster [GIANT]
Initiative: +15

Naginata +14 vs. AC (2 attacks)—40 damage
Miss: 15 damage.

R: Lightning from torn sky +14 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies, plus one far away enemy, if any)—52 lightning damage
Limited use: 1/battle, but the ogre lightning mage regains the use of this attack if it's expended each time it uses its *naginata* attack.

R: Past master's judgment +14 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—25 psychic damage
First natural even hit each attack: The ogre lightning mage can cancel one spell or magical effect created by the target.

Flight: The ogre lightning mage flies well using the sheer power of its superior mind.

Invisibility: While not engaged, the ogre lightning mage can turn invisible as an at-will standard action. It becomes visible when it attacks. The ogre mage takes 1d10 damage each time it uses *invisibility* while it's staggered.

Resist exceptional attacks 16+: When a limited attack (not an at-will attack) targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Trollish regeneration 20: While an ogre mage is damaged, its uncanny flesh heals 20 hit points at the start of the ogre mage's turn. It can regenerate five times per battle. If it heals to its maximum hit points, then that use of *regeneration* doesn't count against the five-use limit.

When the ogre mage is hit by an attack that deals fire or acid damage, it loses one use of its *regeneration*, and it can't regenerate during its next turn.

Dropping an ogre mage to 0 hp doesn't kill it if it has any uses of *regeneration* left.

AC 24
PD 20 **HP 230**
MD 22

Prismatic Ogre Mage

When the air cuts your eyes and time flips sideways each time the gem embedded in the ogre's hand pulses, you aren't going to remember that you ever wondered whether these magicians caused the ogre magi's fall from the Emperor's good graces or whether they showed up afterward to arrange vengeance. You'll just want them dead. Or at least far enough away to make the horizon stop turning somersaults.

Large 9th level caster [GIANT]
Initiative: +16

Horns and claws +15 vs. AC—75 damage
Natural 2–5: The prismatic ogre mage can use *prismatic blast* as a free action without provoking an opportunity attack.

Force shove +15 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with ogre)—10 force damage, and the target pops free from the ogre mage
Quick use: This power only requires a quick action (once per round) instead of a standard action when the escalation die is odd.

"Yes, I swear by whatever you consider holy that this is a gem torn from the forehead of a prismatic ogre mage. You really don't want to be using it as the stone in your engagement ring. I'm serious this time. Really. Oh come on, what is it going to take to get you to trust me I'm actually trying to help this time."
—Benholm the Diplomat

R: Prismatic blast +15 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—Roll a d8 against each hit target to determine the type of ray and effect
1. *Red:* 75 fire damage; *Miss:* 40 fire damage.
2. *Orange:* 50 damage, and the target is confused (save ends).
3. *Yellow:* 40 ongoing poison damage.
4. *Green:* The target loses a recovery, and the prismatic ogre mage heals 70 hp.
5. *Blue:* 60 lightning damage, and make a secondary attack:
   +15 vs. PD (one enemy near the target)—20 lightning damage.
6. *Cyan:* The target is stunned (save ends).
7. *Purple:* The target is dazed and confused (save ends both). When the target saves, it takes 40 psychic damage.
8. *Magenta:* The target is transported into the future. Remove that creature from play, returning it to the battle in (or near) its previous location at the end of its next turn. No time seems to pass for the target while it's gone.

Resist exceptional attacks 16+: When a limited attack (not an at-will attack) targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Warp: The prismatic ogre mage warps reality with its presence. Each character hit by the *prismatic blast* attack during battle must write down one true personal trait or preference about their character such as: "Yellow hair," "Afraid of spiders," "Prefers white wine to red," or "Tattoo of a halfling on left bicep." These personal traits are shuffled and randomly distributed equally by the GM after the battle is over. Whichever trait each player receives is now true for their character as well as for the character of the player who wrote it down (unless there has somehow turned out to be a swap . . .). These traits don't alter game mechanics (feats, powers, backgrounds, icon relationships, attributes, bonuses, etc.). They are personal details that have been warped and scrambled by the prismatic ogre mage's magic.

AC 25
PD 22 **HP 360**
MD 18

Environmental Effects: Chaos-Touched Weirdness

The prismatic ogre mage's presence warps reality. No actions required—it's an aura that always surrounds the ogre and becomes more pronounced during battle. Prismatic ogre magi are themselves unaffected by chaos-touched weirdness effects, except for the random chance that they are affected by dimensional rifts. The effects usually fade from the area within a day after an ogre is defeated or leaves.

If this is too much weirdness for your game, use one effect at a time, or consider it a nastier special. If your game can handle it, at the start of a battle involving one or more ogre prismatic mages, roll a d6 twice (reroll the same result) to see what effects are in the area:

1. **Stinging grit. Pebbles that crawl like insects. Biting grass.** During its turn, if a creature doesn't use a quick action to block/slap away these distractions, it takes a –2 penalty to all defenses until the start of its next turn.
2. **Darklight. The light in the area cuts flesh. Deadly silences.** Whenever a creature attacks a target that is far away, the attacker takes 2d20 negative energy damage.
3. **Gravity periodically zigzags.** When a creature moves, it takes a –2 penalty to attacks until the start of its next turn.
4. **Jumbled is time. Moves order events of out.** At the start of each new round, creatures with even initiative counts increase their initiative count by 1d6, and creatures with odd initiative counts decrease their initiative count by 1d6. Any verbal communication requires the creature speaking to use a move action to be understood.
5. **Solids liquefy and liquids solidify.** When a creature wants to move, it must roll a normal save. On a failure, it's stuck until the start of its next turn.
6. **Dimensional rifts.** At the end of each round, two random creatures in the battle trade positions with each other. Repeat that process again for each additional set of two random creatures until all creatures have moved position once, or until there's only a single creature left without a creature to trade with.

I Loot the Gems

You know that a player who hasn't read this book is going to want to loot the prismatic gems embedded in a slain ogre mage's palms and forehead. Reward them by saying that they've gained one usable gem that provides the wielder with the ogre mage's *resist exceptional attacks* ability. The gem's power recharges on a 16+ and its quirk is that the wielder keeps wanting to carve open their hand or forehead and place the gem there. Once they use the power, hit them with chaos-touched effects every other battle that only affect them and their allies, not the enemy. Keep that cursed effect going the rest of the day, then make the curse effects start affecting them every battle if they still hold on to the gem.

Building Battles

Clearly we haven't made ogre magi any simpler to run in the *Bestiary*. Generally you'll only want to run a single ogre mage caster at a time. The knights might fight in pairs. The casters generally work solo, accompanied by minions and meat-shields of all varieties. We opted against using the charm monster-style spells that are typical of most d20-rolling versions of the ogre mage, but that shouldn't stop you from associating ogre magi with any monster that's smart enough to follow their orders. They'll even work with their dim-witted cousins, ogres, if it suits them.

Ogre Magi and the Icons

Archmage: Unless you have a different story in mind, think of ogre magi as rivals to the Archmage. They're cognizant of his power but probably think they could do better if they had his resources. The Archmage doesn't like their ability to dispel or warp powerful magic. He probably suspects they are undermining his wards. He's probably right.

Crusader: The Crusader is comfortable bossing around ogres. And he loves to give orders to ogre magi. But the relationship isn't as subservient as he would like and he suspects they have other masters.

Emperor: If the Emperor employs ogre magi, he's definitely keeping it a secret from the Archmage.

Prince of Shadows: Yes.

Names

This really depends on how you decide to handle ogre magi. They might have Japanese names, though that feels wrong to us. They might have names that sound like they come from Hong Kong movies and martial arts traditions, Third Terrible Grimace, for instance, or Destroying Daughter. They might disarm humans and elves by using the same kind of names as humans, though those will probably not be their true names.

Adventure Hooks

The Iron General—Recent raids in the area by highly disciplined mercenaries have been causing a lot of trouble. Investigation reveals the raiders are coming from a fortress deep in some nearby hills. The few survivors of the raids speak of the mercenaries referring to how the attack fulfills part of their leader's plan, someone they called the "Iron General." When the PCs confront the raiders and their general, they'll learn that an ogre mage wears that moniker, and that his attacks serve a terrible larger purpose that he is in fact willing to betray—for a price. Use this hook when the ogre mage is out of the PC's league, so that negotiation is a serious option.

Lost River Tavern: What curious sequence of events led an ogre mage to inherit or build a half-decent tavern on the "scenic" banks of the Lost River? If the PCs have to take a campaign loss to escape the "drinking contest," they'll never find out.

ORC

Savages, harbingers of destruction, brutish and degenerate mockeries of other races. The orc is the embodiment of all that civilized folk fear is secretly true about themselves.

orc tusker

Possible Orcs

Orcs vary in appearance and physique. Some orcs are hairy, while others are entirely bald, some have green skin, while others have skin that is scabbed or brown or white or yellow or covered in warts. Many have tusks, but others have rows of shark-like teeth. Most members of a given tribe or pack tend to resemble each other, but the weird ways in which orcs spawn like an infection in the earth ensure that there are always odd new orcs entering the world.

Specific details of how orcs function aren't something we want to design for you. There have been any number of convincing depictions of orcs in fantasy literature and games. You should use the ideas that suit your campaign. And you should probably be open to ideas from your players when they suggest that some-orcs-work-like-this.

Here are a few options we've used in games, though seldom all at the same time. Other options and bigger plot lines will come in a different book when we delve more seriously into the Orc Lord's hordes.

- Most orcs only live ten or twenty years if something doesn't kill them first; that's part of the reason they don't have a huge problem with undeath.
- Orcs live a lot longer in places like the Red Wastes and Moonwreck; the more polluted and broken the land, the better it is for them.
- Orcs are patriarchal when they've got any kind of culture.
- Orcs are matriarchal and orc women know magic that has increased in power thanks to the emergence of the Orc Lord.
- Isolated communities of humans and other races that degenerate may turn into orcs without even being raided.
- Some of the worst orcs rise spontaneously from noisome pits, lava fields, battlefields, massacre zones, and areas touched by demons. They're driven by a primordial anger that other orcs can't measure up to.
- The longer orcs stay around the Orc Lord, the smarter and more dangerous they become.

- Orcs adapt and change quickly to match the nature of their masters; the Orc Lord just has a bit more juice that way.
- Orcs are the most common inhabitants of living dungeons.
- There is a secret taxonomy of orc characteristics and if a serious magician could figure it out they'd be able to shut down much of the orc spawning-pits.
- Scholars who've tried to catalog all the orc variants are deceiving themselves, but at least they'll have something to keep them busy until it kills them.

Pit-Spawn Orc

This orc just crawled out of the ground, fully formed: a malevolent stain upon reality.

Double-strength 2nd level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +2

Punch or bludgeon +7 vs. AC—5 damage

Mob attack: The crit range for pit-spawn orcs is 17+. Whenever a pit-spawn orc scores a critical hit, each pit-spawn orc mook in the battle gains a +1 cumulative bonus to damage until the end of the battle.

Nastier Specials
Boiling rage: When an enemy engaged with the orc hits it with an attack, the enemy takes 4 damage as the orc bites and claws it back.

AC	**17**	
PD	15	**HP 18 (mook)**
MD	12	

Mook: Kill one pit-spawn orc for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

Orcish Archer

It takes patience to be a true archer. Orcs lack that. So they fire as many arrows as possible, hope for the worst, and work themselves toward a frenzy that demands the sword.

2nd level archer [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +5

Scimitar +6 vs. AC—6 damage

R: Short bow +6 vs. AC—7 damage
Natural 1–5: Reroll the attack against a random nearby creature. If the rerolled attack is also a natural 1–5, the orcish archer takes 3 damage from sheer agonized frustration, but it doesn't get to make another attack.

Final frenzy: When the escalation die is 3+, the orcish archer gains a +3 bonus to melee attacks and melee damage.

AC	**18**	
PD	17	**HP 32**
MD	11	

Cave Orc

Their bodies are thin and twisted with bat-faced grinning skulls and huge nearly-blind eyes, but the high-pitched screeching they use as sonar is perfect orcish. The sounds are nearly 100% curse words, but that's not uncommon for orcish.

3rd level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +6, or +12 at night or in dark caves

Obsidian knife +8 vs. AC—4 damage, and +1d4 damage for each other orc engaged with the target (max +4d4)

R: Rock +7 vs. AC—5 damage

Hears everything: Increase the DC to sneak past cave orcs silently by +5.

Nocturnal predator: If the battle is at night (or in darkness), the orc gains a +2 attack bonus. If the battle is during the day (or in daylight) it takes a –2 penalty to all defenses.

AC	**19**	
PD	18	**HP 10 (mook)**
MD	12	

Mook: Kill one cave orc mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

Death-Plague Orc

These orcs are monstrous and filthy harbingers of illness and ruin. Where they walk plants die and streams curdle. Evil masterminds scheme at ways of inserting death-plague orcs where they can do the most harm but the containment systems (i.e., other orcs) tend to break down en route.

Large 3rd level spoiler [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +2

Huge spiked flail +8 vs. AC—21 damage
Natural roll is above target's Constitution: The target catches a disease (see **Death-Plague Orc Diseases**).

AC	**20**	
PD	18	**HP 90**
MD	12	

orc battle screamer

Orc Battle Screamer

Some tribes have just enough culture to support pseudo-bards whose battle screams sound like marching hymns to orcish ears. They use skull drums and sharpened flutes made from the femurs of their enemies. You don't even want to know what they make bagpipes out of.

3rd level leader [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Sharpened flute or club-like drumstick +9 vs. AC—10 damage

Orcish Instruments: Choose ONE

R: Skull drum +7 vs. MD—8 damage, and as a free action, one nearby orc ally can move or make a basic attack (doesn't trigger special abilities)

R: Bone flute +7 vs. MD—8 damage, and one nearby orc ally deals +1d6 damage on a hit during its next turn

R: War bagpipes—1d3 nearby or far away enemies that can hear the bagpipes must immediately roll a normal save; on a failure, the target is hampered until the end of its next turn

AC	**22**	
PD	15	**HP 33**
MD	15	

Orc Tusker

Huge tusks, powerful jaws, and a tiny piggy mind that senses what anyone else would call 'pain' as anger.

3rd level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +7

Club'n'tusk +5 vs. AC—7 damage

Furious charge: The attack instead deals 12 damage on a hit if the orc tusker first moves before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn.

Miss: 4 damage, and the orc tusker pops free from all enemies.

AC	**22**	
PD	17	**HP 45**
MD	13	

Building Battles

Obviously, many orcs are part of the Orc Lord's hordes. As such, raiding bands often contain a mix of other humanoids like goblinoids, ogres, trolls, and occasionally even hill giants for more powerful groups. The orcs also make use of beasts that they capture as mounts and guards—often the beasts are warped into aberrations by the foulness that spawned the orcs.

Death-plague orcs are a special breed that are often encountered only with their own kind. The Orc Lord likes to send them into civilized areas to weaken the opposition shortly before his forces attack. Hags with *weakening touch* have occasionally been known to work with/use them as well, diverting suspicion from themselves to the orcs.

Death-Plague Orc Diseases

When a creature contracts a death-plague orc disease, roll a d4 for the disease type and a d6 for that disease's symptoms *after the battle*. Until cured, at the start of each day (after each full heal-up) the PC makes a Constitution check (including any appropriate background) to determine the severity of the disease for that day, or if the PC is cured.

Full bed rest under the care of a healer reduces the severity roll from a d6 to a d4 (so a severity check result of 18 would be 1d4 + 2 not 1d6 + 2). A PC under the care of an experienced healer or someone who knows healing magic gains a +10 bonus to the Constitution check. At the GM's option, special ingredients or healing items, found via quest, can give additional bonuses to the check.

Disease Type (d4)

1 Filthy Fever (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

1: Slight temperature.

2–3: The runs. You gain 1 less recovery than normal after a full heal-up due to fluid loss.

4+: You have a hacking cough that sounds like insane laughter and are losing fluids. You gain 2 less recoveries than normal after a full heal-up and can't remain silent.

2 Chatter Pox (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

1: Unsightly and painful sores, occasional shivers.

2–3: Running sores, shivering and chattering teeth. You take a –3 penalty to social skill checks and to attack rolls with spells.

4+: Infected sores, fever dreams. Your constitution is weakened. After each full heal-up, roll 1d4 + 3 to determine your starting maximum recoveries for that day. Each time you cast a spell that isn't at-will, there's a 25% chance it fails (but you don't expend the spell).

3 Slug Scourge (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

1: Extreme appetite, nausea.

2–3: Vomiting up slugs. Whenever you make a non-combat Charisma check, roll 2d20 and take the lower result.

4+: The slugs are inside your lungs! After each quick rest, you lose 25% of your maximum hit points. If you drop to 0 hp this way, you enter into a coma until the next day.

4 Red Fever (d6 roll for symptoms that day)

1: Scarlet stripes on the eyeballs, itching, buzzing in ears.

2–3: Blurred vision. You take a –3 penalty to ranged attacks.

4+: Fever, rage, and confusion. Whenever you roll a natural odd attack roll, you are confused until the end of your next turn. Ranged attacks have a 25% chance of accidentally targeting a random ally (check before making the attack roll).

Disease Severity (Con check each day; result affects d6 symptoms roll)

1–14:	d6 + 3
15–20:	d6 + 2
20–24:	d6 + 1
25–29:	d6 + 0
30+:	Cured

Don't use the death-plague orc and its fiddly attendant diseases unless your group is in the mood to consider diseases fun. My group? Not one that has much interest in roleplaying the consequences of disease. Other groups embrace the challenge with masochistic zeal. Just remember that diseases are only truly interesting if the story forces characters to deal with serious problems while they're under-the-orc-weather.

As a replacement for a disease, have a target hit by the huge spike flail *attack roll an immediate save; on a failure, it loses one recovery due to the foulness of the weapon and short-term pestilence.*

Orcish Environmental Effects

Orcs are despoilers, ruiners, and destroyers. Wherever they stay ends up strewn with the bones of their victims and of their meals, often the same thing. The following optional effects might be found in locations where orcs are living.

Orc Filth: Orcs and hygiene don't go hand-in-hand. While in areas of orcish filth, any creature other than an orc or half-orc that fails a save against ongoing damage increases the amount of ongoing damage by 1d4.

Orcish Funk: There is an odor that lingers in the area. You can't smell it—your nose refuses to report back—but the back of your sinuses burn and your eyes water. While in the area of funk, when an enemy of the orcs rolls a natural 1 or 2 on an attack roll or on a save, it's dazed (save ends).

Totemic Spiral: Thousands of tiny statues, most of them only an inch or two high, are arranged in a large spiral. The statues depict orcs engaging in orcish activities. Some statues are definitely fertility idols, but others look like tiny demonic orcs. While in an area with a totemic spiral, all orcs and half-orcs gain a +1d4 attack bonus (one roll for all) each round. If the d4 result is a 1, the orc-kind take half damage from the attack, hit or miss.

Orcs and the Icons

The orcs' relative lack of imagination combined with their brutal strength and natural belligerence suits them well to the role of frontline troop. Their general lack of intelligence makes many underestimate the orcs' low cunning, and among the orcs there are actual geniuses who put that underestimation of them to good use. Most of the villainous icons make use of orcs in some way or another.

Crusader: The Crusader's relationship to orcs depends on your campaign. In a campaign where the Crusader competes with the Great Gold Wyrm as a publicly plausible defender of the Empire, orcs are probably only secretly of use to him. In a campaign where the Crusader seriously doesn't give a damn what anyone else thinks, he might try to find ways of employing orcs to soften up targets that he'd rather not waste real troops on. Since orcs don't fight well alongside humans and the other races that provide most of the Crusader's support, orc forces are better manipulated from a distance than incorporated into armies.

One obvious place the Crusader is willing to use orcs in most any story is as the first wave of assault against hellholes, or as harassment force against hellholes he's not ready to attack yet. The trick is to get his agents in command of the orcs so that they don't realize they're being played.

Diabolist: The demon queen probably gets a good laugh out of orcs, especially death-plague orcs. Orc guards are not too perceptive but putting a dozen orcs at an intersection of underground tunnels works as an alarm system for her brighter and more reliable servants. Orcs are always handy to have around as sacrifices or as food for larger demons.

Lich King: Orcs don't mind the undead, though some orc tribes have to be restrained from trying to eat the fresher ones. Most orcs don't mind becoming undead, and some of them are so ferally stupid that they probably wouldn't notice that it has happened to them.

Orc Lord: The Orc Lord is the icon that orcs flock to. Whether death-plague orcs or a pack of cave orcs, the Orc Lord unites all orcs into an iron fist that will soon smash the world. Orcs venerate and worship their darkly charismatic leader.

The Three: The dragons often use orcs, but they keep them away from Drakkenhall. Orcs are too destructive to put in an urban environment, plus they taste bad.

Names

Orc names tend to be short and violent, like their lives: Ashnak, Brahgrak, Grash, Gaz, Shakru, Draknok, Kutrok, Takgrog. Some few orcs earn nicknames if they rise in prominence in their tribe or clan: Red Fang, Old One-Tooth, White Fur. Clan and tribe names are impressive, sometimes named after their notable members or frightening attributes: the Red Fang Band, the Skull Smashers, the One-Eye Gang, the Clan of the Bear Riders, the Eye Cutter Tribe.

Things Orcs Carry

Gold coins with tooth marks. Filthy rags. Severed ear necklace. Treasure map scrawled on elf-skin. Dwarf-skull codpiece. Bone club. Tomb-looted sword. Poorly fitting armor scavenged from past victims. Half-eaten greenish meat (might be cheese, hard to tell). Heavy leather bag of coins (sadly all are copper pieces). Dead rat. Live rat. Shrunken orc head. Eyepatch. War paint. Broken parts of a silver statue looted from a temple. Healing potion (probably, it isn't labeled). Pouch of uncut gems. Undead skeleton skull on a stick. Unidentified greasy mass. Fleas. Disease.

Adventure Hooks

Clean Up—A somewhat prosperous town begins to uncover signs of a previous orcish infestation followed by increasing incidents of orcish undead. The area needs a serious purification ritual, but which of the icons has the proper magic? Treat this hook as an opportunity for the PCs to advance their icon's cause in a non-violent and only semi-competitive framework with the other PCs. The worst that could happen? The wrong PC wins the argument, the ritual gets bungled, and orc undead rise in a horde. But the PCs are better than that. Maybe.

Orcish Games—Two tribes have decided to settle their differences by seeing which of them can kill the heroes first. Orc bards planning to witness the event want to get the adventurers' side of the tale before the fun starts.

Plague—A band of death-plague orcs are on the march, spreading disease and misery. Those that they kill are rising up as zombies. The call has gone out for brave adventurers to face the orcish menace. Alternatively, the call has gone out for competent adventurers willing to escort certain rich-but-cowardly members of society to safety elsewhere in the Empire. Complications ensue.

PREDATORY PLANT

It's not easy being a green leafy predator in a world of non-rooted magical predators. A few tough little survivors prove it can be done. Beg pardon: giant *survivors.*

pixie pod

Plants of a Different Color

There are doubtless a number of dangerous plant creatures reliably serving the green-thumbed spellcasters who created them. The plants detailed below are not those plants. These plants have gotten out of control, spreading out into the wild, the alleyways, and the underworld as nuisance threats that just might kill you after you've survived what you thought was the real battle against the gnolls.

Claw Flower

Once upon a time these purring carnivorous plants sent out bumblebee-shaped spores that recognized their proper masters. These days they're still sending out the spores but no one seems safe from attack.

2nd level spoiler [PLANT]
Initiative: +6

Serrated claw +7 vs. AC—8 damage
Natural 1–5: The claw flower takes 1d4 damage from burst roots.

C: Bumble spores +4 vs. MD (1d2 nearby random non-plant creatures)—The effect depends on the roll
Natural even hit: 4 psychic damage, and the target is confused until end of its next turn.
Natural odd hit: 3 psychic damage, and the target is stuck until end of its next turn.
Miss: 2 psychic damage.

Immobile until pressed: The claw flower has roots and normally can't move, but when it takes 10 or more damage from a single attack it can move normally during its next turn.

Spore escalator: The claw flower adds the escalation die to its *bumble spores* attack rolls.

Nastier Specials
Gentle roar: Once per battle, the claw flower can make a *bumble spores* attack as a quick action.

AC	**16**	
PD	12	**HP 40**
MD	15	

Pixie Pod

True pixies know when they are being mocked. They hate these plants so passionately that they remember plans to hunt and kill them for entire hours, rather than the standard five to fifteen minutes most thoughts command in the pixie thought process.

Pixie pods are magically endowed plants that sprout minor servitors in bread-basket-sized seed pods. As long as it has at least one active servitor, the pod is invisible and extremely difficult to harm. Slay all its servitors and the plant stands defenseless.

Double-strength 3rd level leader [PLANT]
Initiative: +7

C: Peripheral summoning +8 vs. MD (one random nearby enemy)—8 psychic damage
Natural even hit: Add a new podling into the battle in a random location.

Release the pods: Once per battle when the pixie pod rolls a natural even hit with peripheral summoning, it adds a number of podlings into the battle equal to the escalation die instead of only one.

Immobile: Although its podlings occasionally pick up and move it around out of combat, in battle the pixie pod can't move and is stuck except for its teleport ability.

Lost opportunity: This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

Lurching teleport: Once per battle as a move action, the pixie-pod can teleport to a nearby location. But its control sucks. The teleport goes in a random direction. Roll it using a d8 for direction.

Magical concealment: As long as one or more of its podlings are nearby, the pixie pod is invisible and extremely difficult to even detect. A PC who wants to locate the pixie pod must spend a standard action searching and succeed at a DC 25 skill check using Wisdom. Backgrounds connected to plants and the wilderness help normally, and general searching skills and magic talents might help a bit but not at full strength. Once located, the plant can be attacked like a normal invisible creature. When it teleports, however, it must be located all over again.

Start with mooks: The pixie pod is normally accompanied by five active podlings that don't count toward the total when building a battle with the pod. Additional podlings do count, however.

AC	**17**	
PD	13	**HP 40**
MD	16	

Podling

They look like green statues of pixies made of mud and fiber. Some people joke that the only way you know they're not podlings instead of pixies is if they're not prattling and giggling and laughing. Stone-cold silent, podlings are.

3rd level mook [PLANT]
Initiative: +9

Needle sword +8 vs. AC—6 damage
Natural even hit: The target can't choose to search for the pixie-pod plant until all podlings in the battle are slain.

R: Tiny green bow +8 vs. AC—5 damage

Nastier Specials
Flight: A podling that can fly, hovering out of reach and firing arrows, can be a real pain in the pate.

AC	**18**	
PD	17	**HP 10 (mook)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one podling mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

Building Battles

Both flavors of these predatory plants are most likely to "hunt" in packs instead of alongside other creatures. Exceptions include specific forests, living dungeons, and the zones around hellholes.

Natural law varies in some forests. In the Dire Wood, for example, constant exposure to runaway arcane experiments has pressured dire animals into many unusual living arrangements—cooperation with predatory plants might be one of the more natural arrangements.

Living dungeons have more than their share of predatory plants and there's no way to predict the bizarre social structures of intertwined monster groups.

In the vicinity of hellholes, hellbugs and predatory plants team up to hunt for fatter softer prey than either can catch without the other's help.

Predatory Plants and the Icons

These plants are "rogues." Icons such as the Priestess, High Druid, Elf Queen, Diabolist, and even the Dwarf King have plant species that are more firmly within their control. Those plants are slated for a book that's more about the icons. . . .

Elf Queen: If she helped create the original pixie pods she's not confessing to it. Given the other creatures she has confessed helping create (the Orc Lord, to name one), she's probably innocent.

"There was just the one performance of Proud Harald's death song. It wasn't that we thought ill of him, or wanted to forget him. But when a dwarf has been killed by muddy mind-controlling plant pixie-things, it's an ill death song and even his closest clan-mates decided to just let it go."

—Brekka Shield-Sister

High Druid: People confuse the Druid's perspective with a plants-over-people philosophy. Watch the Druid's followers mow through a forest infested with claw flowers and you'll realize it's not that simple. Of course, that antipathy to claw flowers might change if they turned out to be controllable.

Adventure Hooks

Control the Claw—One of the treasures the PCs have looted in their latest triumph appears to be an alchemical formula for a ritual that controls claw flowers. Will the PCs test it themselves to command a higher price? Or will they concoct a more cunning plan?

Island of the Pixie Pods—If there were an island in the Midland Sea overrun with pixie pods, whose temple would be concealed at the center? Would it be full of treasure? Or would it be the supernatural equivalent of a noxious weed?

PURPLE WORM

Earth shaking? Buildings collapsing? Pray that it's an earthquake.

Ancestral Purple

The purple worm has been with us since the early days of dungeon-delving. Most of what we've known about the worm is that it is enormous. And hungry. It chisels through rock with razor-sharp teeth in a giant maw. And it's purple. And a worm. Yep. That's about all.

We're going to trust the traditions of our people. If forty years of dungeon-delving haven't yielded a grander story for the purple worm, we shouldn't *force* such a story into your game.

But this is *13th Age*. We're about making up things that feel almost-right even though they're new . . . and about giving your table the license to come up with a purple worm story that's so cool that you wonder why it hasn't been done before.

So here's what we've got. First, we have stats for purple worms and ancient purple worms alongside a couple minor monsters, larva and parasitic beetle mooks that can make a purple worm fight slightly less focused on the worm. We suspect that ancient elder worms have outgrown both larvae and parasites, but if you disagree, you can upgrade the mechanics. Second, instead of a definite backstory, we'll suggest story ideas you might use in your game. If none of them fit, well, sometimes a worm is just a worm.

"Getting swallowed by one of these beasties isn't as bad as being spat back up. The stomach acid fouls most types of glass and ruins potions, containers, and liquor. Drink a hearty stout to get the taste out of your mouth while your clothes dry over the campfire."

—Bernie Barrelsmasher, dwarf fighter

Purple Worm

In and around the Empire they have been known as bocatta, grynderwyrms, slab-breakers, crushmouths, kathons, and daoel. Fancy names for death from below.

Huge 8th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +11

Devouring maw +13 vs. PD—50 damage
Natural even hit: The target is swallowed whole if it's smaller than the worm (see below).
Miss: Half damage.

Tail sting +13 vs. AC (one random nearby enemy)—20 damage, and 20 ongoing poison damage

C: Mighty thrash +13 vs. AC (1d3 random nearby enemies)—30 damage
Miss: Half damage.
Natural 1–5: The worm takes 10 damage (but it still deals miss damage on a 2–5).
Limited use: The worm can make this attack as a free action if it has no enemies swallowed after using its standard action during its turn.

Swallow whole: While a creature is swallowed whole, it takes 7d10 acid damage at the start of its turn and is stuck, hampered, and unable to attack or affect anything outside the worm's stomach (and vice-versa). Most teleport abilities don't work because you're hampered *and* you can't see the location out of the worm you want to teleport to. There are two ways out.

Cut your way out: Deal 40 damage to the worm with a single attack and you can cut your way out. All edged or bladed weapons are reduced to d6 damage dice (at most) inside the worm's gullet, so good luck. At least you'll be damaging the worm attacking it from within.

Get upchucked: While the worm is staggered, you can use a standard action to try and crawl out of its mouth. Roll a hard save (16+); on a success, the worm vomits you out and spits you somewhere nearby. The worm also vomits out all creatures it has swallowed when it drops to 0 hp.

Burrow: As the standard monster ability (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 200).

Nastier Specials

Larval feeding: The worm's stomach also includes a mob of larval mooks (purple larvae or parasitic lightning beetles). Feel free to add this nastier special if a PC acts dismissive about the possibility of being swallowed by the worm.

Resist most energy damage 16+: Purple worms generate weird energy resistances thanks to underworld radiation and their odd diets. Roll a d8 twice, in secret, to determine what energy types the worm is not resistant to. The PCs probably have to find out what energy works best against the worm the hard way, though you might have mercy and allow a DC 35 Wisdom skill check to figure out what energy types work against the worm.

1: acid; **2:** cold; **3:** fire; **4:** lightning; **5:** thunder; **6:** holy; **7:** negative energy; **8:** poison.

AC 23
PD 22 **HP 440**
MD 17

Parasitic Lightning Beetle

Survivors of purple worm attacks who say that the worms cast lightning bolts can be forgiven for not noticing that the lightning came from the purple-and-green giant beetles swarming from the worm's back onto the corpses of the fallen.

8th level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +14

Mouthparts +12 vs. AC—10 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The target also takes 5 lightning damage.

R: Lightning zap +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy not engaged with a purple worm, purple larvae, or parasitic beetle)—20 lightning damage
Natural even hit or miss: The target takes 5 extra lightning damage.

Flight: The beetles fly badly, usually just enough to get back to the worm when they've been shaken off from their hiding spots in its segments.

Scaredy bugs: Whenever one or more parasitic lightning beetles drop to 0 hp, roll a d6. If you roll less than or equal to the number of beetles that were destroyed by that attack, all beetles in the battle stop fighting, using all their actions during their next turn to disengage and fly away.

AC 27
PD 22 **HP 36 (mook)**
MD 17

Mook: Kill one lightning beetle mook for every 36 damage you deal to the mob.

"Step back or die as a disgrace to our tribe. How can you expect to challenge a dragon without slaying a worm first? Come back to me with a tentacle carried by your slaves. You might be worth killing then."

—Kalag, half-orc chieftain

Purple Larva

Friends of warriors eaten by larvae usually just keep the story simple and say that their friend was slain fighting a purple worm.

8th level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +9

Bitey maw +13 vs. AC
—20 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The larvae can make a *tail stinger* attack against a random enemy engaged with it as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Tail sting +13 vs. AC**
—5 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

Merge with worm: Purple larvae can dig quickly in and out of the skin of the purple worm as if they were burrowing but without needing die rolls to succeed.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 44 (mook)**
MD	16	

Mook: Kill one purple larvae mook for every 44 damage you deal to the mob.

Ancient Purple Worm

Deep, deep down the rock is strong enough to support this ancient beast so that it feels comfortable. Up near the light where two-legged creatures live, the worm gets so angry its mandibles buzz.

Huge 12th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +17

Devouring maw +18 vs. PD—100 damage
Natural even hit: The target is swallowed whole if it's smaller than the worm (see below).
Miss: Half damage.

Tail sting +18 vs. AC (up to 2 random nearby enemies)—40 damage, and 40 ongoing poison damage
Miss: 20 damage.

Prodigious thrash +18 vs. AC (1d4 random nearby enemies)—50 damage
Miss: Half damage.
Natural 1–2: The worm and any creatures it has swallowed take 8d6 damage (but it still deals miss damage on a 2).
Limited use: The worm can make this attack as a free action if it has one enemy swallowed or less after using its standard action during its turn.

Swallow whole: While a creature is swallowed whole, it takes 10d12 acid damage at the start of its turn and is stuck, hampered, and unable to attack or affect anything outside the worm's stomach (and vice-versa). Most teleport abilities don't work because you're hampered *and* you can't see the location out of the worm you want to teleport to. There are two ways out.

Cut your way out: Deal 80 damage to the worm with a single attack and you can cut your way out. All edged or bladed weapons are reduced to d6 damage dice (at most) inside the worm's gullet, so good luck. At least you'll be damaging the worm attacking it from within.

Get upchucked: While the worm is staggered, you can use a standard action to try and crawl out of its mouth. Roll a hard save (16+); on a success, the worm vomits you out and spits you somewhere nearby. The worm also vomits out all creatures it has swallowed when it drops to 0 hp.

Burrow: As the standard monster ability (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 200), but with a +5 bonus to the check.

Nastier Specials

Resist most energy damage 16+: Purple worms generate weird energy resistances thanks to underworld radiation and their odd diets. Roll a d8 twice, in secret, to determine what energy types the worm is not resistant to. The PCs probably have to find out what energy works best against the worm the hard way, though you might have mercy and allow a DC 35 Wisdom skill check to figure out what energy types work against the worm.

1: acid; **2:** cold; **3:** fire; **4:** lightning; **5:** thunder; **6:** holy; **7:** negative energy; **8:** poison.

AC	**27**	
PD	25	**HP 1200**
MD	21	

Building Battles

Purple worms should be a battle on their own, perhaps with a mob or two of larvae or beetles thrown in. They also make for a good way to amp up a battle in the underworld against humanoids. Just as the fight seems in hand, the ground rumbles and the PCs' opponents flee screaming as the worm burst into view.

Any creature that has learned how to attract, and thus somewhat control, purple worms is dangerous indeed. If that creature is a caster or archer, and has somehow learned to ride the worm, it might be the heroes' worst nightmare.

Shades of the Worm

Here are some possible options for how purple worms are connected to the PCs. Many of these options could work together. Others should probably be kept apart. Choose what works for you. Or what works for the people at your gaming table. They might surprise you.

Deep Purple: Normal purple worms and their larvae carry poison stingers in their tails. Animals normally use tail stingers to protect themselves from nastier predators. What in the underworld could be tougher than a purple worm? And what will it do to the surface world?

The High Druid's Perspective: The High Druid suspects that purple worms are part of one of the world's great ecological cycles, cleaning up the "mess" left by living dungeons after they have been slain. Obviously worms do a hell of a lot of collateral damage along the way, so it's not like the Druid is mushy about the worms, or protective. She's just certain that they're accomplishing great works of disaster clean-up.

The Rumble Just Off-stage: Purple worms are not subtle. A worm burrowing through the earth sets off small quakes. Before the PCs are ready to deal with a purple worm, use the worm's mini-earthquake passage as a sign of huge danger and the imminent destruction of areas the PCs can't manage to defend. By the time they're epic heroes they'll itch for vengeance.

Magic Eaters: Obviously the bulk of the worm's diet is rock. And sometimes it eats people and creatures. But what if what it *really* wanted to eat were high concentrations of magic items? For starters, purple worms would be the natural enemies of dragons (protecting their hoards), and dwarves (protecting the King's treasures). They'd also be far more likely to target groups of adventurers walking around with several items apiece than a peasant village where the main crop is lima beans. So maybe the purple worms' favorite foodstuffs are true magic items. Maybe if you can kill a worm and open it up, you'll rescue grateful items that haven't been digested yet. Depending on who you ask, that might even be old school.

> *"One by one, the buildings disappeared beneath the earth. The smithy was first, then the inn, then the armory. The guardsmen went into the holes left behind but the sounds of battle were soon swallowed by the rumble of the beast under the ground. Then the townsfolk began disappearing underneath the dirt. They dropped like stones in the river. A few of us found solace on a stout boulder. The creature smashed into it once, twice . . . and had it hit us again, it surely would have knocked the rock to pieces. But it went looking for easier prey, letting us four survivors of Paragon live to tell this tale."*
>
> *—Artemissa Burlee, Transcripts of the Dragon Emperor's Petitioners, Volume MCMXXLV*

Plot Devices: One great way to use a purple worm is as a surprising plot development. Perhaps larger forces in the campaign are using them in an unforeseen way. Or maybe they emerge to add drama at an already critical moment in the campaign.

For example, a powerful new cult might use the purple worm as its symbol because it opposes the Dwarf King and because the worms eat stone . . . and then purple worms surface and move en masse toward Forge. Or an epic ritual in the Wild Wood could go terribly wrong so that purple worms riddle the wood as if it were a great green apple. Maybe the Crusader could figure out how to use purple worms as armored personnel carriers to send his forces against a deeply buried hellhole—with horrible consequences when the demons reverse the assault. That's for starters. Entertain yourself.

RED DRAGON

Scales the color and temperature of cooling lava, razor-sharp claws that could scoop up a draft horse, teeth like the swords of the fire giants, white-hot breath like a blast furnace, a thrashing tail that shatters bone, and massive wings that form hurricanes of super-heated air . . . and to think that it's the eyes that are terrifying.

"So he says, 'I ride red dragon into Queen's Wood. You find me one, Horth, you make it my mount. You have four days.' That wuz six days ago. Wherem I gunna go? Whatem I gunna do?"
—Horth the Disemboweled, 16 hours before he earned his sobriquet

The Song of Treasure

Some red dragons are chaotic thugs, content to emulate the massively destructive feats of the Red without needing a larger vision. Other red dragons, and especially the hoardsong and greathoard elder variants presented below, have found something they love more than destruction and chaos—their treasure.

Red dragons with an ear for treasure actually hear wealth singing to them. A red dragon's own hoard sings to it in a song no other creature can hear, a breathtaking chorus of counterpoint and harmony. Adding or removing a single gemstone or gold coin will shift a hoard's song, making it even more beautiful (if added) or cacophonous (if items are removed.) Over time the song becomes boring, so red dragons seek out more and more treasure. As usual, some are more obsessed with treasure-hunting than others.

In a glorious self-sustaining "coincidence," consuming the blood of a sentient creature makes the song of a dragon's hoard louder, sharper, and wilder. This is why dragons devour people at a terrifying rate; their gold sings more loudly to them for a time afterward. The blood of male or female virgins, bards' blood, the blood of royalty, and in particular the blood of any royalty who minted the coins found in the dragon's hoard? Perfection itself. Red dragons aim to eat princes and princesses for a reason, and not because they're typically snappy conversationalists.

A dragon lounging on its hoard is alternately sybaritic and bloodthirsty, consumed with the song but hungry for a touch of something new. A dragon away from its hoard is angry, irritated, and possessed by a paranoid longing for the valuables it left behind. A red dragon that returns to its hoard and finds that someone has stolen from it has a new mission that overrides all other goals: listening to the fading fragments of lost hoardsong as it attempts to track the thieves.

Ordinarily, we suspect that only a dragon can hear its hoardsong. That should change when the dragon makes a hoardsong attack—for a moment one or two heroes have to face the wave of magical power contained within the dragon's hoard.

Dragon Abilities

All dragons have the *escalator* and *flight* abilities (see below). They also have one (or sometimes two) random dragon abilities. See page 233 for how to determine a dragon's random dragon ability or abilities, and for the ability list.

Escalator: A dragon adds the escalation die to its attack rolls.

Flight: A dragon flies reasonably well, powerful and fast in a straight line though not as maneuverable as more agile flyers.

Volcano Dragon

Shoveling gold and precious stones into bubbling lava seems to be enough for this great beast. Or is that just what it wants you to think so that you won't look for its hoard?

Large 7th level wrecker [DRAGON]
Initiative: +12
Vulnerability: cold

Fangs, claws, and wings +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—18 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 5 extra damage from a wing buffet.
Natural 18+: The target takes 10 extra damage from a claw strike.

[Special trigger] **Tail smash +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—18 damage
Miss: 9 damage.
Limited use: When a nearby enemy attacks and rolls a natural even hit against the dragon, the dragon can make a *tail smash* attack against it as a free action.

C: Volcanic breath +12 vs. PD (each nearby enemy)—20 fire damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage
Natural 18+: The target takes 10 ongoing fire damage instead of 5.

Burning skin: When an enemy is engaged with the volcanic dragon at the start of its turn, it takes 5 fire damage.

Continuous breath: A volcanic dragon can use *volcanic breath* 1d3 times per battle, but if it does not use its breath weapon on consecutive rounds, it loses its remaining *volcanic breath* attacks for the battle.

Resist fire 14+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**23**	
PD	22	**HP 220**
MD	16	

"By the express order of Vlannek, his Imperial Majesty's Eastern Minister: It is to be known throughout the land that no more young people of royal descent, whether princesses or princes or any approximation thereof, may be sacrificed to red dragons to propitiate their unnatural lust for the taste of royal blood. Fear not, O Children of Royalty, for your sacrifice is now unlawful and shall never come again! In substitution, all royal sacrifices must be over the age of 50. Local governors are hereby ordered to deliver this proclamation to any dragon dwelling within their borders, on threat of fines.
—An unpopular Imperial proclamation by ex-Minister Vlannek

"I have seen it, my little adventurer. I have touched the snout and felt the heat from the seething cage of rotted flesh. The blood-red scales still cling, and surely it dreams dead dreams of the memory of long-stolen gold. He will ride it in battle again, I think, and the world will tremble at the thunder of its wings."

—Skurggarek Half-heart, mid-dissection, prattling on to a new client

"Pfft. In truth there is nothing at all to fear from red dragons. Merely speak the command phrase handed down to us from the Gods of Light themselves—'Iklaym! Yore lutan-bugg, erallyu kanduab, outeet!'—and they are forced by the laws of magic to perform three tasks for you and then leave you in peace. Seriously. Try it."

—Benholm the Diplomat, not trying particularly hard

Hoardsong Dragon

A bard who appears to have some talent might be allowed to hum a few bars before they are added to the hoardsong through the magic of digestion.

Large 9th level spoiler [DRAGON]
Initiative: +13
Vulnerability: cold

Fangs and claws +14 vs. AC (3 attacks)—30 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 15 extra damage from a precise strike.

C: Hoardsong +14 vs. MD (one nearby enemy in the dragon's lair)—10 psychic damage, and the target is confused (save ends)
Limited use: 2/battle, as a quick action (once per round).

C: Precise breath +14 vs. PD (1d4 + 1 nearby enemies, or one enemy)—20 fire damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage; OR 80 fire damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage if used against a single enemy
Natural 18+: If the breath targeted multiple enemies, the target takes 20 ongoing fire damage instead of 10. If the breath targeted a single enemy, the target takes 40 ongoing fire damage instead of 20.

Intermittent breath: A hoardsong dragon can use *precise breath* 1d4 times per battle, but never two turns in a row.

Known to an ounce: The dragon knows where every treasure in its hoard is located, allowing it to detect any movement or shifting of the coins and valuables. While in its lair with its hoard, the hoardsong dragon is immune to invisibility and ignores illusions, and creatures attempting to hide from it take a –5 penalty to their checks.

Resist fire 16+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Nastier Specials

Hoard minions: The dragon's connection to its hoard is so strong that it has some control over the souls of those it previously killed who owned the treasures. Once per round as a quick action, the hoardsong dragon can summon 1d4 hoard spirits that take form by surrounding themselves in coins, wear empty suits of armor, etc., and defend the dragon's hoard. Roll initiative for the minions once and use that count for all additional minions.

The call of the hoard: The connection of a hoardsong dragon to its hoard imparts the dragon's magic upon the hoard. Before battle, if the PCs are able to see the hoard while the dragon speaks to them, each PC that can hear the dragon must roll a Wisdom check. On a result of 24 or less, that PC is charmed as per the *charm person* spell and considers the dragon a friend. On a result of 25–29, the PC is lulled by the dragon's words and the sight of the hoard; if combat occurs, the PC will be stunned during their first round. The dragon will make a suggestion to charmed PCs to leave and bring it more treasure for its hoard (while it prepares surprises for their return). Charmed PCs won't attack the dragon, but can make a normal save each round in battle to break the charm effect (or every day outside of combat).

AC	**25 (26 in lair)**	
PD	24	**HP 360**
MD	18	

Hoard Spirit

9th level mook [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +15

Hoard-fueled strike +14 vs. AC—35 damage
Natural 16+: The target is stuck under a pile of treasure until the end of its next turn.

AC	**24**	
PD	22	**HP 50**
MD	18	

Greathoard Elder

If the Dwarf King has nightmares, these are the creatures he's dreaming of.

Huge 11th level wrecker [DRAGON]
Initiative: +14

Fangs, claws, and wings +16 vs. AC (2 attacks)—90 damage
Natural 14+: The target takes 12 extra damage from a wing buffet.
Natural 16+: The target takes 20 extra damage from a claw strike.
Natural 19+: The dragon can make a *treasury master* attack as a free action.

C: Treasury master +16 vs. MD (the nearby non-confused enemy with the most true magic items)—30 psychic damage, and the target is confused (save ends)
Limited use: 2/battle, as a quick action (once per round).

C: Precise breath +16 vs. PD (1d4 + 1 nearby enemies, or one enemy)—50 fire damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage; OR 170 fire damage, and 30 ongoing fire damage if used against a single enemy
Natural 18+: If the breath targeted multiple enemies, the target takes 25 ongoing fire damage instead of 15. If the breath targeted a single enemy, the target takes 60 ongoing fire damage instead of 30.

Call of the hoard: When an enemy is engaged with the greathoard elder in its lair at the start of its turn, it must roll a normal save; on a failure, it hurls one random non-armor true magic item into the dragon's hoard (adjust stats accordingly). The item is unavailable until the end of the battle. If the dragon flees or is defeated, lost magic items can be retrieved.

Greathoard rage: When an enemy scores a critical hit against the greathoard elder while it's in its lair, the elder can reroll one of its missed attacks each round (cumulative) as its hoard sings a song of carnage to it.

Intermittent breath: A greathoard elder can use *precise breath* 1d4 + 1 times per battle, but never two turns in a row.

Resist fire 16+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Nastier Specials
Iconic comparisons: The dragon is enamored/envious of the icons with the greatest hoards: the Dwarf King, Elf Queen, Emperor, Prince of Shadows, and the Three. For each PC who has at least one positive or conflicted relationship point with one or more of those icons, the greathoard elder gains an extra use of *treasury master* this battle.

AC 27 (28 in lair)
PD 26 **HP 870**
MD 20

Losers Weepers?

GMs should allow creative methods of recovering lost magic items from *call of the hoard* to foster creative roleplaying. Story guide icon rolls? Beseeching the Prince of Shadows? When they are recovered, most items will be sheepish about having been taken so easily.

Flamewreathed Dragon

Now you know fire. A final lesson.

Huge 12th level spoiler [DRAGON]
Initiative: +15

Fangs and claws +17 vs. AC (3 attacks)—75 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 20 ongoing fire damage.

C: Primal fire breath +17 vs. PD (1d4 + 1 nearby enemies, or one enemy)—60 fire damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage; OR 180 fire damage, and 30 ongoing fire damage and the target is weakened (save ends both) if used against a single enemy
Natural 18+: If the breath targeted multiple enemies, the target takes 25 ongoing fire damage instead of 15. If the breath targeted a single enemy, the target takes 60 ongoing fire damage instead of 30.

C: Whirling inferno +17 vs. PD (each nearby enemy taking ongoing fire damage)—The target's ongoing fire damage increases by 5 and becomes hard save ends (16+) as the dragon fans the flames
Limited use: 2/battle, as a quick action (once per round).

Intermittent breath: A flamewreathed dragon can use *primal fire breath* 1d4 + 2 times per battle, but never two turns in a row.

Resist fire 18+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Wyrm of fear and flame: While engaged with this creature, enemies with 120 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attacks), do not add the escalation die to their attacks, and take 4d20 fire damage at the start of their turn.

Nastier Specials
Draconic fire: The dragon's will and magic are so powerful that it ignores the fire resistance of creatures battling it.
Smoke minions: The dragon's lair is wreathed in smoke and fumes, and through its magic the dragon has some control over those hot gases. Once per round as a quick action, the flamewreathed dragon can summon 1d4 smoke minions that take humanoid or bestial form and defend the dragon's lair. Roll initiative for the minions once and use that count for all additional minions.

AC 28
PD 21 **HP 1100**
MD 27

volcano dragon

Smoke Minions

12th level mook [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +13

Invasive gases +17 vs. AC—55 damage
Natural 16+: The target is hampered from burning eyes and gases in its lungs until the end of its next turn.

AC 26
PD 20
MD 24

HP 80

Building Battles

In their lair, red dragons are delighted to expend slaves, mercenaries, and worshipers to wear down their enemies and gauge their opponents' strength. They are not ones to lounge about on a hoard while enemies knowingly invade their redoubt, however. A resourceful red dragon repeatedly ambushes its foes within the lair, aiding allies selectively with traps or flame or dragon fear, until invaders are weakened sufficiently to the point where a full-fledged assault seems guaranteed of success.

In the air, a red dragon prefers to strafe enemies from above, using fire or flyby attacks to keep moving and out of an enemy's reach. One of the reasons that red dragons are legendary foes is that they inflict terrible damage on a huge swathe of the battleground, but are notoriously hard to maneuver into a position of vulnerability.

On the ground, dragons are reluctant to engage in melee unless they are on a battleground large enough to properly maneuver. Wing buffets do the dragon no good if the ceiling is too low. They will often use their bulk to move enemies into dangerous areas.

Due to red dragons' great intelligence, cunning, and power, almost any creature can be allied with them.

Red Dragon Terrain: Smoke and Fire

Red dragon lairs, which can be extensive with many tunnels, caves, false leads, and obstructions, tend to be filled with burning smoke, hot gases, lava, and similar effects that coil throughout the area and seemingly don't dissipate. In addition to poor visibility, hidden pits leading to lava pools, and tunnels suddenly exploding with flaming gases, many red dragons have a magical connection to the smoke and fire they surround themselves with.

Through their innate magic, the dragons are able to make faces and forms appear in the smoke to distract intruders, fill clear chambers with choking smoke in a matter of seconds, and ignite explosive geysers of hot lava or burning gases, all from a distance as they watch over their hoard. A few know their smoke so well, they can even track creatures as they move through the lair simply by the distortions and currents that are created within the vapors. These dragons always know when intruders have come.

Thanks to their fire resistance, red dragons are immune to natural heat, including lava. Those that choose to lair in volcanoes take special care in picking out the location for their hoard, since the song of molten gold is dull and muddy, but the intermittent pools and tunnels of bubbling molten lava dotting the complex make all of the special care worth it. Is there anything funnier than bursting up in the middle of a lava pool, spitting molten stone at intruders, then swimming away to another pool to do it again? Of course not!

A Powerful, Cunning Foe

Red dragons are trained from birth to understand the mechanics and tactics of power. They are the ultimate dominant predators, but this means that they understand how dominance works. One dragon versus five or six well-armed, experienced, so-called "heroes" doesn't historically go very well for the dragon. Dropping ceilings and shattering floors, hit-and-run or divide-and-separate tactics until the enemy's might is gauged, spells that rip away fire resistance at the worst possible time (at least for the adventurers), decoy treasure hoards, and traps that affect anything smaller than a dragon but not the dragon itself? All are standard procedure for a canny red dragon . . . and despite the propaganda, stupid red dragons don't usually survive to adulthood.

The more inventive red dragons use their own hoard to trap and befuddle their prey. Crushing dwarves under tons of coins is a particularly hilarious method to most reds—subtle, they aren't. A thin layer of coins may hide a pit trap, illusions of sparse treasure may hide either real treasure or a deadly trap, and chests of coins may act as counterweights when resetting traps.

The ubiquity of treasure in a red dragon's hoard can actually be used against them sometimes. Some dragons, particularly ones that are obsessed by hoardsong, are loath to harm even a single coin of their hoard. Threatening to destroy treasure can buy a few precious seconds, or perhaps a parley (until the dragon figures out a way to shred/fry the offenders without harming the hoard).

The connection red dragons have with their hoards makes some scholars ponder whether hoardsong really is sentient, and if it can predict the future? Is it a method for hearing the secret whispers of a dead god of greed and wealth, or is it the Archmage's ploy for slowly subverting red dragons to his cause? If there is any truth to this idea, a massive red dragon's hoard could be almost as much danger to the heroes as the dragon itself.

Red Dragons and the Icons

It takes great power and even greater courage to enlist a red dragon to your cause. They're temperamental, conceited, and unpredictable unless you can easily predict "murderous engine of destruction." If you can, you'll know exactly what you're getting. Red dragons are most likely to briefly serve an icon's cause in exchange for regularly delivered royal-blooded or pure-blooded sacrifices, for particularly enticing treasure (and lots of it!), for an advantage it can literally achieve no other way, or for the cessation of a particular irritation that it would rather not bother with. For instance, if an icon guaranteed that no adventurer would invade a dragon's lair for a century if the dragon performs one simple task, a bored red dragon might entertain the proposition. It might also devour the messenger, earning enmity with the icon. What part of chaotic evil makes this a surprise?

Archmage: He worries more about red dragons than most, partially because his strongholds in the overworld are particularly vulnerable to creatures that are most effective when flying. At best, the Archmage thinks of red dragons as recalcitrant tools; at worst, he thinks of them as troublesome but compact collections of spell components.

Diabolist: She knows more than most that if the red dragon has a weak spot, it is mental. Can a demon of seduction and subtlety slip past a dragon's defenses to possess it? Only she knows.

Dwarf King: There are not words to describe the hatred and bitter grief felt by the Dwarf King about red dragons. They must pay for what atrocities they have committed; so much genius and

beauty lost to the dragons, so many pulled from the world of the dwarves and cast down forever at the dragons' feet! All that treasure must be returned, and the sooner the better. And oh yes, vengeance for their slain ancestors, of course.

Emperor: The red dragon is a symbol for raw power applied with deadly force, for cruelty beyond measure, and for inchoate cunning. There is a place for such measures in the Emperor's rule, but the red dragon is an object lesson in the danger of single-minded obsession.

Great Gold Wyrm: They embody the worst of dragonkind, binding greed and hunger beyond measure into the same form. There are rumors that hoardsong is the Great Gold Wyrm's gift to the world, to bind red dragons to their lair and stop them from further destroying the world.

Orc Lord: There's no fear when the Orc Lord and his followers look upon a red dragon, but there's a near-suicidal jealousy. Why should such an engine of unstoppable murder be denied the orcs as a mount and loyal follower? When heroes find an orcish camp burned to the ground, one can usually assume that a red dragon had no interest in being subdued and tamed.

The Three: You wouldn't want to say that red dragons *serve* the Three, exactly. They more reluctantly aid them if it happens to be convenient for them and sufficient treasure of prey is offered, or if their dignity and pride are suitably inflamed. This suits the Three quite well, who know better than any other how to motivate a red dragon into action and make it think it was the dragon's own choice to begin with.

The Red and His Hoard

Speaking of choices, in your campaign you can choose whether the Red himself is addicted to his hoard or whether hoardsong only affects lesser red dragons. Hoardsong could help explain why the Red is so often content to linger in the wastelands beyond the map rather than challenging the Archmage's wards. Stories about the Red's treasure trove, and the pieces that have been stolen from it over the centuries, could also spur many plots, but you need to judge whether the idea suits your campaign.

Names

Red dragons prefer names that convey terror, sounding like the snapping of bone or the bubbling of melted flesh. They have three names: the secret clinking names given to them in their dreams by the hoardsong, the names they call themselves and occasionally reveal to terrified mortals, and the shortened sobriquets given to them by the charred and terrified cities within their hunting territory. Corpseflame the Ancient, for instance, may refer to itself as Cortheriax. What its hoard might name it is never spoken aloud.

Adventure Hooks

Six things dominate a red dragon's every waking thought: dominance, greed, hatred, hunger, territory, and pride. For some, lust will also come into play. Loyalty, though? Not so much.

Red dragons outside of their lair are usually engaged in pursuing one of these drives. They are notoriously stubborn and petulant, so a clever wordsmith might use that against a dragon if it gives them enough time. Alleviate a red dragon's boredom, make its mind strain to solve unfamiliar riddles and challenges, and you may buy yourself a few minutes grace to converse with it and learn things. Just don't be surprised when the dragon loses patience and eats you, or lets you live only to destroy everything else you hold dear. As beings that effectively live forever, they have time for proper revenge.

Bone and Blood—A local weaponsmith has been selling dragonbone weapons carved from the corpse of a recently slain red dragon. The dragon's spirit is not yet gone, however, and, driven on by pure hatred, it has found a way to possess anyone wielding such a weapon. The heroes must discover the cause behind a spate of recent arsons and murders, and put the dragon's soul to rest once and for all.

Over Easy—After a memorable and near-legendary three-day coupling across the summer skies last year, a red dragon's latest clutch of eggs are starting to hatch. The mother has not been seen in months, and without food or guidance the hatchlings have taken to the fields, killing and devouring any beast they can catch. It's all hands on deck as the small dragons must be destroyed while they're still small, and before their mother returns. And why is there one egg that has yet to hatch, but which seems oddly swollen and pulsing?

Princely Blood—A certain city follows the old ways, and those old ways involve chaining royalty to the dragon altar whenever someone with royal blood makes the mistake of coming to town. It's perfectly safe, they assure their visitors, just an ancient formality to propitiate the legend of the wyrm. When a dragon arrives to accept the offering, however, there's a prince/princess that must be saved, and fast.

Smartest of the Lot—A young red dragon has a genius-level intelligence and is smart enough to barter some of its growing hoard for magical tutelage. A magic-using PC has the opportunity to become the official teacher of a dragon, a title and accomplishment that will stay with them for their entire life, but there are a multitude of things that could go wrong (not least of which is that a magic-using red dragon is a horrible thing indeed.) Does the PC accept the offer, knowing the consequences for refusing?

The Ties That Bind—A red dragon is demonstrating remarkable levels of loyalty and obedience to a would-be dictator who has ridden into town. The usurper has promised that if he is harmed in any way, his pet dragon will destroy the town, and he's made a few demonstrations to prove it. Why is the dragon acting like an obedient herd beast? Some brave heroes need to hunt it down in the wild hills outside of town to find out.

Worship Your God, O Mortal, And Exult—A red dragon has gone insane, believing the lies that its hoardsong whispers to it, and has declared itself a living god. Now it demands worshipers, forces the building of temples, eats clergy that don't swear to worship it, and spends its days with terrified religious scholars deciding upon its holy laws and making up new myths. The Gods of Light are affronted by the blasphemy, and the Priestess's diplomats hire the PCs to solve this deific pretender's aspirations of divinity, one way or another.

REDCAP

Top of the list for noises you don't want to hear? Sharpened fingernails digging into wood, the snapping of filed teeth, and a giggle followed by the faint, hollow clang of iron boots as a redcap readies itself to spring.

Sadistic Little Creeps

Redcaps are neither brawny nor capable of earthshaking magic. Thanks to their insane giggling and stompy iron boots they're not even particularly stealthy, unless they're waiting in ambush or have teleported into the liquor cabinet, waiting for you to go for a nightcap. They compensate for their shortcomings with a bad attitude—they're flat-out meaner and crueler than sadistic sociopaths ten times their size.

Redcaps are small, perhaps two to three feet tall at most, and resemble beardless dwarves who've had the air let out of them. Their wiry strength gives them tremendous agility, and they tumble and spring infuriatingly around larger foes. Redcaps fight using straight razors, cleavers, axes, sharp knives, or most any sharp or jagged object, really, including their teeth. They will also use their spiked iron boots at every opportunity during battle, being inordinately proud of their footwear. It's traditional for a redcap to give a downed enemy one final stomp for good measure before moving on to the next foe. Few can tolerate redcaps, but this practice guarantees that no one actually likes them.

Redcaps have the ability to teleport into an unobserved space when they're lucky in combat or when foes err by saying, or even thinking, the *bad word*. The word changes all the time. Obviously we aren't really going to punish a player for what their character thinks, but the idea that thinking the *bad word* is enough lets us punish a player who says the word, even if their PC didn't.

Redcaps usually prefer vanishing into small constrained spaces such as closets and chests, and beneath beds. The redcaps' magic even lets them fit into spaces that are technically too small for them. When they emerge from their tight hiding spot, they unfold or pop-out like jack-in-the-boxes. It can be humorous . . . in a deadly, disturbing way.

The Bad Word: Before every battle against redcaps, the GM should determine the *bad word* for that battle. For PCs who don't have any idea what's coming, "cap" or "redcap," is a good option. For characters who have fought redcaps before or for players who like to read monster entries, a word like "guy" or "escalation" or "attack" might suffice. Whenever a PC or a player at the table says the word, every redcap in the battle can use its *impossible teleport* ability as a free action that interrupts whatever action is currently happening. At least the PCs will then know what the word is . . . well maybe after the second time it happens. Let the players try not to think about the word now!

Those Reddish Caps: Perhaps the players are wondering how those caps get so red as they're trying not to think about the word. Redcaps dip their hats in the blood of their kills. Steal a redcap's hat and you steal both its power and its prestige, earning you an enemy for life. A redcap with a white or pale red cap has little experience in murder and mayhem. On the other hand, one with a blood-clotted, deep carmine hat is likely to be very dangerous. Plan accordingly.

Splotchcap

Their caps have obvious bloodstains, but some white still shows through and they haven't earned their boots. Call one "splotchcap no-boots" and you'll have an enemy forever, or at least for one busy minute.

2nd level archer [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +8

Stabby knife +5 vs. AC—6 damage
Natural 16+: The target also takes 2 ongoing damage.

R: Smashy slingstone +7 vs. AC—7 damage
Natural 18+: The target can't cast a spell until the end of its next turn or until the splotchcap drops to 0 hp, whichever comes first.

[Special trigger] **C: Pop-out and stab 'em +7 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—8 damage
Miss: Damage equal to the escalation die.

Impossible teleport: When the splotchcap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the splotchcap can teleport to a nearby hidden location it can see as a free action.

Pop-out surprise: When the splotchcap starts its turn and no enemy can see it, it can make a *pop-out and stab 'em* attack that turn as a standard action.

AC	**16**	
PD	17	**HP 32**
MD	14	

"We ended up burning down the fane to get rid of them. I still don't think it killed them. One more instance of giggling through the floorboards, and I'm summoning Her to finish the job."
—Solthra Halfblade, blood wizard

"It crushed my foot! Oh Lords it's on my head with knives. Get it off get it off get it off!"
—Jovan the Unlucky, dark paladin

Redcap

Warriors who've fought redcaps once too often shudder at the thought of giving their own children piggy-back rides.

3rd level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Twin skinning knives +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)—6 damage
Miss: Damage equal to the escalation die.

Stompy iron boots +8 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)—12 damage
Miss: 5 damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Pop-out and ride 'em +10 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—10 damage, and 5 ongoing damage
Ridey-horsey: While the target is taking ongoing damage from this attack, the redcap is riding the target's shoulders with its knives in the target's ears, and once during its turn the redcap can use a move action to make the target move anywhere nearby that won't directly cause it harm (but opportunity attacks are fair game).
Miss: 5 damage.

Impossible teleport: When the redcap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the redcap can teleport to a nearby hidden location it can see as a free action.

Pop-out surprise: When the redcap starts its turn and no enemy can see it, it can make a *pop-out and ride 'em* attack that turn as a standard action.

AC	**17**	
PD	18	**HP 42**
MD	15	

"They're simply misunderstood. Show no fear, walk to them slowly, and offer them meat. If you do, you shall have a friend for life, as they are more afraid of you than you are of them."
—Hixus Snowhair, confusing redcaps with red bears

Crimsoncap

"Crimsons'n'crusties" was a curse frequently heard on the docks of Shadow Port . . . until the redcaps heard it and "transferred" half a shift of dockworkers over to the beggars' guilds.

6th level spoiler [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +11

Huge bloody cleavers +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)—13 damage, and the crimsoncap can pop free from the target

Horrible stompy boots +11 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)—20 damage, and the target is hampered (save ends)
Miss: 5 damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Pop-out and slash 'em +11 vs. AC (1d4 nearby enemies)**—15 damage, and 5 ongoing damage
Miss: 10 damage.

Impossible teleport: When the crimsoncap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the crimsoncap can teleport to a nearby hidden location it can see or can't see (like inside a closet) as a free action.

Pop-out surprise: When the crimsoncap starts its turn and no enemy can see it, it can make a *pop-out and slash 'em* attack that turn as a standard action

Nastier Specials
*F*** T***:* The crimsoncap has two *bad words* instead of one. And the PCs find that out the hard way. Write the words down ahead of time to prove you're not *just* being a mean GM.

AC	**20**	
PD	21	**HP 84**
MD	18	

Crustycap

When the blood no longer sticks because there's too much ancient scabbing on your cap, you've done your part.

7th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +14

Big bloody axe +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—10 damage
Natural even hit: The crustycap can make a single *big bloody axe* attack against a different nearby enemy as a free action.
Miss: 5 ongoing damage.

Devastating stompy boots +12 vs. PD (one staggered or unconscious enemy)—40 damage
Miss: 10 damage.

Oh no oh no: When a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the crustycap can take an extra standard action during its next turn. Feel free to let the extra actions stack a few times if someone gets cocky.

Nastier Specials
Just plain mean: When the crustycap scores a critical hit OR when a PC or a player at the table says the *bad word*, the crustycap can teleport away as a free action. Far away, even to a location it can't see, and out of the battle. Then at the start of the PCs' next battle, it teleports back and attacks the PCs, no matter what enemies they are fighting. It will continue to use this power if it can until the PCs take a full heal-up, at which point, if it's still alive, it loses interest.

AC	**21**	
PD	22	**HP 100**
MD	19	

Building Battles

Redcaps are most fun to fight (where "fun" is defined as "bedeviling and challenging the player characters, who seem to be getting repeatedly attacked from every side at once") in deep woods, urban buildings, or ruined castles. They like to take advantage of places they can hide, so if there is little such terrain, they lose a lot of their impact. Whatever the setting, they prefer to operate at night, or in deep shadows during the day.

Redcaps are mean little buggers, and they like to take it out on those around them. In forest settings, consider pairing them with beasts such as dire animals or owlbears that have been driven mad from the redcaps' surprise attacks. The slightly bleeding beast barrels into the party, followed by a pack of giggling redcaps on its heels.

In urban settings, they like to play with giant vermin like spiders and dire rats, or hive creatures like stirges. They will lure people into the nests of such creatures, then make surprise attacks as the vermin defend their lair.

The worst redcap infestations occur in places where they forge short-term bonds with the Diabolist's pets, such as imps and despoilers. Once the redcaps get into demon worship, they're even worse than usual.

Redcaps and the Icons

Redcaps have a sly and feral intelligence, but it's usually masked by unquenchable cruelty and a bubbling insanity that would be fun to watch if it weren't attached to something so dangerous.

Dwarf King: Loremasters for the Dwarf King suspect that redcaps were once normal dwarves who were magically altered and manipulated to produce the giggling menaces that now exist. If so, it's possible that someone or something is even now kidnapping dwarves and transforming them into redcaps. Dwarves are generally instructed to capture redcaps instead of killing them, in order to find out the truth, but the task has proven almost impossible.

Elf Queen: The Elf Queen has no shame about setting redcaps upon her foes. For their part, redcaps seem to pay her a certain amount of deference and often listen to her messengers first instead of just slaying them. In combat, redcaps have been known to spontaneously bow to the Elf Queen's followers . . . right before trying to eviscerate them.

Emperor: The Emperor occasionally mentions redcaps as a symbol of the ancient chaos that needs to be wiped out utterly in order for civilization to thrive. If this has affected the number or behavior of redcaps either way, no one has noticed.

Lich King: It's rumored that the Lich King has a clan of undead redcaps specially reanimated to preserve their psychotic enthusiasm while vastly increasing their deadliness. Their boots drain life and blood, and the redcaps sustain themselves on the blood absorbed by their caps. If true, the icon doubtless reserves them for enemies he particularly wants to send a message to. If false, it's not hard to imagine a redcap clan painting itself zombie-style just for kicks.

Prince of Shadows: Redcaps would deny it, but their natural affinity for shadow and predilection for stealth makes many people think they are a creation of the Prince of Shadows. He's never confirmed this, but he also has never hesitated to manipulate a clan of redcaps into attacking a particularly repellent target.

The Three: Clans of redcaps are occasionally found serving as spies, guards, and servants of dragons. They gravitate toward dragons that show particular cruelty, and they never seem to mind the inevitable loss of life to their own clan that occurs near a dragon. For their part, dragons seem to find them amusing.

Names

Redcaps cleave to the style of dwarven first names, with their status as their last name. Thrommel Splotchcap, Honjor Crimsoncap, and Thorja Crustycap are a few examples.

Adventure Hooks

Redcaps don't take direction well, although they have been used as troops by leaders who don't mind pointing them in one direction and letting them rampage. They live in clans or gangs and attack in groups, competing to see which one will collect the most (or most spectacular) kills. A lone redcap is usually an exile from their gang, and the only reason a redcap is typically exiled is for insufficient bloodlust. It isn't uncommon for exiles to be hunted by the rest of their clan, so they don't usually survive alone for long unless they are particularly cunning.

Redcaps provide a chaotic and tumultuous battle, but they aren't entirely devoid of subtlety and subterfuge. They will often have a "secret" up their metaphorical sleeve that can change the storyline dramatically.

> *"Sing a song of pools of blood / sing of spikes that clitter-clack / sing of giggling child-men / sing of blades within your back."*
>
> *—traditional elven children's jumping-rhyme*

> *"I have it under good recommendation that powdered redcap hats, combined with the molten iron from their melted-down boots, makes a superb teleportation token. Go fetch me a few, won't you?"*
>
> *—Ecruvius the Ancient, to an appalled apprentice*

I Have a Secret—Redcaps know many secrets, although it isn't clear how or why this happens. When it's obvious that they have been beaten, and there are no good hiding places left to use for a teleporting escape, the last redcap standing may bargain for freedom in exchange for revealing a true secret about someone or something personal that one or more PCs cares about. A redcap will never reveal such a secret before a bargain is made; oddly enough, mind-reading magic has suggested that the redcaps don't even know the secrets themselves until they utter them, leading sages to believe that they draw their secrets from some hidden shared source. There are also ramifications for breaking such bargains, even if the redcap who struck the deal is slain. Usually it takes the form of heavy redcap harassment.

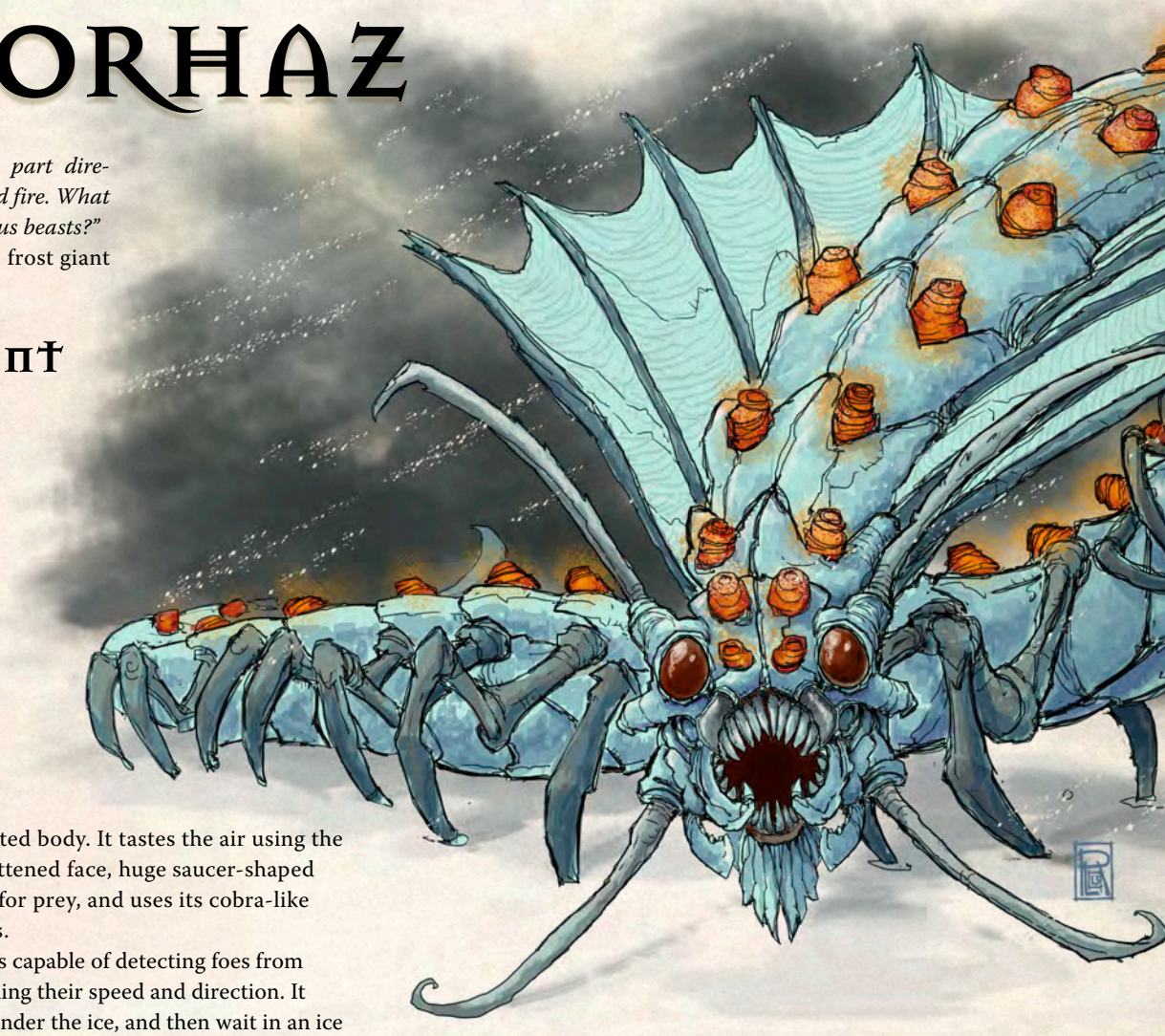
Look Out Below—After a baron's estate becomes riddled with redcaps who start murdering his servants, the baron hires/asks the PCs to fix the problem. As the PCs are cleaning out the estate, including the chimney, well, outhouse, cellar, secret passages, and every other hiding place they can find, they discover an important political secret related to one of the icons and redcaps. If the secret got out, it would be very damaging. . . .

Red Contract—After a nasty battle, the PCs uncover an arrangement by which redcap gangs are hired by agents of the Court of Stars to exterminate goblinoid squatters in former elven forests. The redcaps are paid with one-use teleport items to take them to the far side of the Midland Sea. And not all their victims are goblins. Will the PCs kill the redcaps and attempt to take over the contract, or is something more noble in store?

The Crimson Caps—The last three mornings, strange reddish caps have been found at the three main intersections of a village. The third day the caps were dipped in actual blood (up to you what type . . .). Most people in the village don't really know what redcaps are, but they know the caps aren't a good sign. Is this a gang of redcaps ramping up the fear before they start picking off villagers night by night? Or is it a con to get people to flee their homes? Or someone's idea of a joke? Or is someone performing a ritual to summon redcaps?

Remorhaz

"Part cobra, part centipede, part dire-rhinoceros. Creature of ice and fire. What mad god made these marvelous beasts?"
—Thorodin Jarlbreaker, frost giant



Remorhaz On the Hunt

The remorhaz is an armored ice-dwelling creature that burrows through the ice by heating its armored plates. The strange beast resembles a giant armored centipede, each leg as thick as a dwarf's neck. When not burrowing, the remorhaz travels with the front third of its body raised off the ground and its front thirty or so legs tucked unobtrusively against its plated body. It tastes the air using the barbels that surround its flattened face, huge saucer-shaped eyes that scan the ice-sheet for prey, and uses its cobra-like hood to listen for heartbeats.

On the ice, a remorhaz is capable of detecting foes from many leagues away, determining their speed and direction. It will burrow toward its prey under the ice, and then wait in an ice cavern it has melted out under their path. The remorhaz can make its plates hot enough to melt most metals. Dwellers in icy places are always on the lookout for the plumes of steam rising from the ice that indicate a waiting remorhaz, often their only warning.

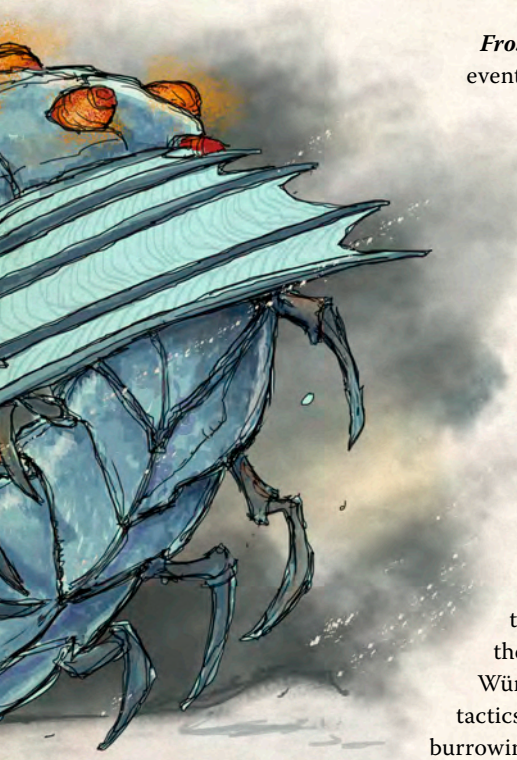
While waiting for its prey, a remorhaz extends its cobra-like hood fans to their fullest and presses them against the ice cavern's roof. When its prey walks unknowing above it, the remorhaz surges upward, melting ice as it goes, and drops the prey into the cavern with it. If the fall doesn't kill its prey, the remorhaz grapples with the meal-to-be, killing it with a combination of constriction and combustion even as it bites off and swallows chunks of its foe. The only remnants of a creature a remorhaz has feasted upon are any melted metals it may have had, which pool at the bottom of the ice cave.

A Deadly Life Cycle

Remorhaz go through five distinct stages of growth: Squib, Barbellite, Frost-Würm, Adult Remorhaz, and Remorhaz Queen.

Squib: Remorhaz start life hatching from something resembling giant milky frog-spawn, emerging alongside thousands of brothers. All remorhaz are born male. The infant remorhaz are a finger-length long and resemble fuzzy soft-bodied worms. Native ice-sheet dwellers call them snow-kittens due to their fur and purring sound, but scholars know them as squibs. The purring sound comes from the squibs' internal organs moving fluid around, stretching the body-cavities of the infant as it grows. Squibs are ravenous, mindlessly consuming their brothers and being consumed in turn. The jaws of a squib are sharp and beak-like with inner mandibles, and as adorable as the snow-kitten might be, when it finds something warm and soft it *will* start biting. Squibs are a danger to travelers because they will move toward any source of heat and look almost indistinguishable from snow.

Barbellite: Once a squib is large enough it moults its furry covering and becomes something resembling a flattened white snake-like creature an arm-length long. The most notable feature of a barbellite is the dozens of trailing barbels that sprout from its body; at this stage the remorhaz is still mostly blind and relies upon taste and smell to locate prey. Sweeping its barbels over the ground the barbellite can pick up even months-old trails made by creatures and follow such paths across ice and rock to the prey. Barbellites are remarkable in that unlike their glowing-hot adult remorhaz forms they absorb heat. A barbellite freezes anything that touches it, causing rime to form on rocks as it passes and instantly freezing water. A barbellite can cross a river just by skating across the water as it freezes beneath it. During the barbellite stage of its life cycle a remorhaz loses its sharp infant beak and its mandibles grow in size.



Frost-Würm: The barbellite eventually grows to tremendous size and loses almost all of its barbels. At this stage it's still in possession of the fluid-filled cavities, but now the purring is a high-pitched trilling sound that can stun its prey. During this phase of its life the remorhaz grows the armored plates and multiple legs that are so distinctive to its adult form, though these are hidden under the worm-like exterior until the second molting. Frost-Würms use both the tracking tactics of the barbellite and burrowing ambush of the remorhaz (though only in snow). They also absorb heat, sucking in air to freeze-dry prey.

Adult Remorhaz: During all previous stages of its life a remorhaz absorbs heat, but upon reaching adulthood it begins to unleash that stored heat. The outer-skin and infant mouth-parts burn away revealing armored plates and legs, and the switch from overland tracking hunter to burrowing ambush predator is complete. Some sport armored roundels that look like glowing fire opals and radiate waves of heat. Adult remorhaz attack frost-würms that come into their territory and vice-versa. They both compete for the same prey and a frost-würm that lives long enough will become a rival for mating rights with the territorial queen.

Remorhaz Queen: Remorhaz are all born male, but throughout their lives they battle others of their kind for dominance and access to hunting grounds. A persistently dominant and successful remorhaz becomes female and attracts mates to fertilize the thousands of eggs that she lays in each clutch. A remorhaz at this stage in life eats the bodies of younger male remorhaz who lose dominance-fights for the rights to fertilize her eggs, but she will still hunt on occasion. Remorhaz queens venture into the territory of other queens and slaughter their potential prey to starve rivals, but rarely attack other queens directly. Remorhaz queens no longer burrow to attack—when they detect prey and haven't eaten a dead male in a while they simply head toward prey like a rushing avalanche. Outrunning a remorhaz queen on the open ice is nearly impossible.

Remorhaz (Squib Swarm)

0 level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +0

Sharp nibbling beaks +5 vs. AC—3 cold damage

Heat absorption: When a creature is engaged with the squib swarm at the start of its turn, it takes cold damage equal to the escalation die.

AC	**14**	
PD	12	**HP 5 (mook)**
MD	8	

Mook: Kill one squib swarm mook for every 5 damage you deal to the mob. A squib swarm consists of hundreds of small individual squib, but they are represented here as a single "creature."

Remorhaz (Barbellite)

3rd level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +7

Arctic bite +11 vs. AC—7 cold damage

Heat absorption: When a creature is engaged with the remorhaz at the start of its turn, it takes cold damage equal to the escalation die.

Shatterer: Death can cause fluid-filled sacks inside the barbellite to explode. When the attack roll that kills the barbellite is a natural even roll, each nearby creature takes 10 cold damage.

AC	**18**	
PD	16	**HP 36 (see *shatterer*)**
MD	12	

Remorhaz (Frost-Würm)

Large 6th level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +9

Würm glaciation +11 vs. AC—18 damage
Natural even hit: The target and one other nearby enemy takes 18 cold damage as the area freezes over.
Miss: The target and one other nearby enemy takes 6 cold damage.

Trilling vibrations +9 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)—The target is stunned (save ends)
Limited use: The remorhaz can use *trilling vibrations* only when the escalation die is odd.

Burrow: As the standard monster ability (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 200), except the remorhaz only needs to roll 6+ in snow.

Massive heat absorption: When a creature is engaged with the remorhaz at the start of its turn, it takes cold damage equal to twice the escalation die.

Shatterer: Death can cause fluid-filled sacks inside the frost-würm to explode. When the attack roll that kills the frost-würm is a natural even roll, each nearby creature takes 20 cold damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 180 (see *shatterer*)**
MD	16	

Remorhaz (Adult)

Large 8th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +11

[Special trigger] **C: Death from below! +14 vs. AC (each nearby creature)**—45 damage; OR 22 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends)
Miss: 15 damage.
Limited use: 1/battle, during the remorhaz's first turn or if appearing on the surface after burrowing.

Savage bite +16 vs. AC—50 damage, 20 fire damage, and the remorhaz grabs the target if it's not already grabbing a creature
Miss: 15 fire damage.

Burrow: As the standard monster ability (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 200), except the remorhaz only needs to roll 6+ in snow and ice.

Furnace aura: When a creature is engaged with the remorhaz (or grabbed by it) at the start of its turn, it takes fire damage equal to 6 x the escalation die.

Nastier Specials
Bejeweled remorhaz: The remorhaz has glowing "jewels" on its armored plates. When a nearby or far away enemy misses with an attack against the remorhaz, that enemy chooses one: It takes 10 fire damage; OR one piece of its non-magical equipment (something useful, but player's choice) melts or burns up. Adjust skill checks or stats accordingly.

Remorhaz steamer: The remorhaz is melting the ice/snow all the time and obscuring steam rises into the air. Ranged attacks against the remorhaz take a –2 penalty, or a –4 penalty if the attacker is far away.

Spiney remorhaz: The remorhaz is covered in red-hot spines. When a nearby enemy rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack roll, it takes 20 fire damage unless it has somehow protected itself from the heat.

AC	**24**	
PD	22	**HP 280**
MD	18	

Remorhaz (Queen)

Large 11th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +2d10 (see *sluggish initiative*)

Bite and trample +17 vs. AC—80 damage, 40 fire damage, and the remorhaz grabs the target
Miss: The target and each other creature engaged with the remorhaz takes 20 fire damage.

R: Nova blast +16 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—100 fire damage
Miss: 25 fire damage.

Burrow: As the standard monster ability (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 200), except the remorhaz only needs to roll 6+ in snow and ice.

Furnace aura: When a creature is engaged with the remorhaz (or grabbed by it) at the start of its turn, it takes fire damage equal to 10 x the escalation die.

Sluggish initiative: The queen may be sluggish after eating unsuccessful suitors, laying eggs, or moving across the ice like a rushing avalanche. Roll 2d10 to determine her current initiative.

Nastier Specials
Bejeweled remorhaz: The remorhaz has glowing "jewels" on its armored plates. When a nearby or far away enemy misses with an attack against the remorhaz, that enemy chooses one: It takes 25 fire damage; OR one piece of its non-magical equipment (something useful, GM's choice) melts or burns up. Adjust skill checks or stats accordingly.

Remorhaz steamer: The remorhaz is melting the ice/snow all the time and obscuring steam rises into the air. Ranged attacks against the remorhaz take a –2 penalty, or a –4 penalty if the attacker is far away.

Spiney remorhaz: The remorhaz is covered in red-hot spines. When a nearby enemy rolls a natural 1–5 with an attack roll, it takes 30 fire damage unless it has somehow protected itself from the heat.

AC	**27**	
PD	26	**HP 580**
MD	22	

Building Battles

Remorhaz don't have allies, but sometimes animals and dire beasts that live in cold environments will make use of their empty ice tunnels or linger in areas frequented by remorhaz, risking attack for the chance to feed upon discarded kills. White dragons aren't afraid of the ice beasts and will sometimes allow their presence near a lair to discourage visitors, or provide the occasional meal. Frost giants have been known to capture barbellites and frost-würms and keep them as pets or amusement.

Remorhaz Environmental Effects

During its life cycle a remorhaz creates its preferred environment of extreme cold. A remorhaz-infested ice-sheet or similar terrain is prone to sudden blizzards, unexpected temperature drops, and vegetation that suddenly bursts into fire as trees and shrubs burn up as a remorhaz passes by underneath. When the adventurers travel deep into remorhaz territory, have each PC make an appropriate skill check (including backgrounds) against one of the DCs below. If the check fails by 9 or less, suggest two effects from the list and let the player choose one that occurs. If the check fails by 10 or more, suggest two effects from the list and let the player choose one that occurs, and then choose another effect from the list that also occurs. Any recoveries lost from these effects are gone until the party can find a place of warmth and safety to take a full heal-up, with food and drinkable water.

Remorhaz Tunnels: DC 25

The ice-tunnels left by a remorhaz are sturdy, yet smooth enough from refrozen water to be slick under foot. Adventurers might take shelter in these tunnels from a storm, or might use them to travel through and avoid detection by surface-dwelling enemies. The tunnels also might be the only way to get to ruins under the ice.

- Fall over on the slick ice and break a piece of useful equipment (adjust skills/stats accordingly).
- Slips on the ice, hurting themself—lose a recovery.
- Lost in the tunnels—one PC who succeeded on their check must reroll it.
- Floor collapses, dropping everybody into a lower tunnel—each PC must roll a save; on a failure, they lose a recovery.
- Sudden blast of wind down the slick tunnel pushes knocks the party off their feet and pushes them down the tunnel—the PC chooses one piece of an ally's useful equipment that is permanently lost during the tumble.
- The party falls into an ice-slick inclined tunnel that hurtles them downward at high speed. Each PC must roll a save; on a failure, they lose a recovery.
- A battle with a hatching remorhaz squib (or if level-appropriate an adult remorhaz!).
- Move to another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their skill check with a –4 penalty.

Extreme Cold/Blizzard: DC 30

The temperature plummets, lantern oil freezes, and familiars huddle up to their owners. Get warm or get dying.

- A frozen piece of their useful equipment shatters (adjust skills/stats accordingly).
- Frostburn—lose three recoveries, or one recovery and a finger/ear/nose/etc.
- Numbing cold—choose two other PCs; they each lose a recovery.
- A battle with remorhaz barbellites (or if level-appropriate an adult remorhaz!).
- Party is separated—each PC who succeeded on their check must reroll it.
- Move to another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their skill check with a –4 penalty.

Sudden Fire: DC 20

Trees that you were sheltering among catch fire for no good reason, or air bubbles trapped under the ice explode and burn.

- A useful piece of equipment or clothing catches on fire and is destroyed (adjust skills/stats accordingly).
- Burns—lose two recoveries.
- Steam vent—choose one other PC; they lose a recovery.
- A slumbering remorhaz queen in a pool of bubbling water is just ahead. (GM's call if she awakens. Maybe the "creature" is just shed molting . . .)
- Move to another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their skill check with a –4 penalty.

Endless Desolation: DC 20

Whiteness. Snow-blindness. Eternal night.

- Lose a useful piece of equipment (adjust skills/stats accordingly).
- AAAAH! Your mind was not meant to handle this solitude—the player and GM discuss what happens. (GMs, have fun!)
- The party is lost—each PC who succeeded on their skill check must reroll it.
- Overexertion—you've eaten too much and supplies have dwindled; lose two recoveries. Another PC can choose to share. If so, you each must roll a save; on a failure, the PC loses one recovery.
- Snow-blind accident—choose one other PC; they have an accident and lose a recovery.
- Move to another environmental condition; each PC rerolls their skill check with a –4 penalty.

Remorhaz and the Icons

Remorhaz live far away from civilized areas, and they can't be tamed or controlled, but that isn't to say that the icons aren't interested in them.

Archmage: The Archmage is known to use remorhaz spell components, or at least he sends his minions out to collect them. It may be a cunning double-bluff to draw the other icons' spies out into the icy wastes where he can arrange for magical "accidents" to befall those who tail his servants. Most wizards believe the remorhaz is not native to the world, while others think that it's a natural beast.

High Druid: There are creatures of the ice that the High Druid is fonder of. Creatures that don't jerk nature around through cycles of endless winter and weird fires that burn forests through their roots.

Orc Lord: The Orc Lord's followers are scattered through the Frost Range where many remorhaz lair. Although remorhaz can't be ridden into battle or tamed, remorhaz squibs could theoretically be dropped down dwarven mine shafts. That might be a bit subtle for the Orc Lord's followers, but it might also be funny.

Adventure Hooks

A Sudden Chill—The remorhaz are migrating, burning down forests. Their young are freezing everything. An icon is desperate and offers to pay for remorhaz heads. Can the adventurers resist the icon's offer of "bags of gold" to face such terrible foes?

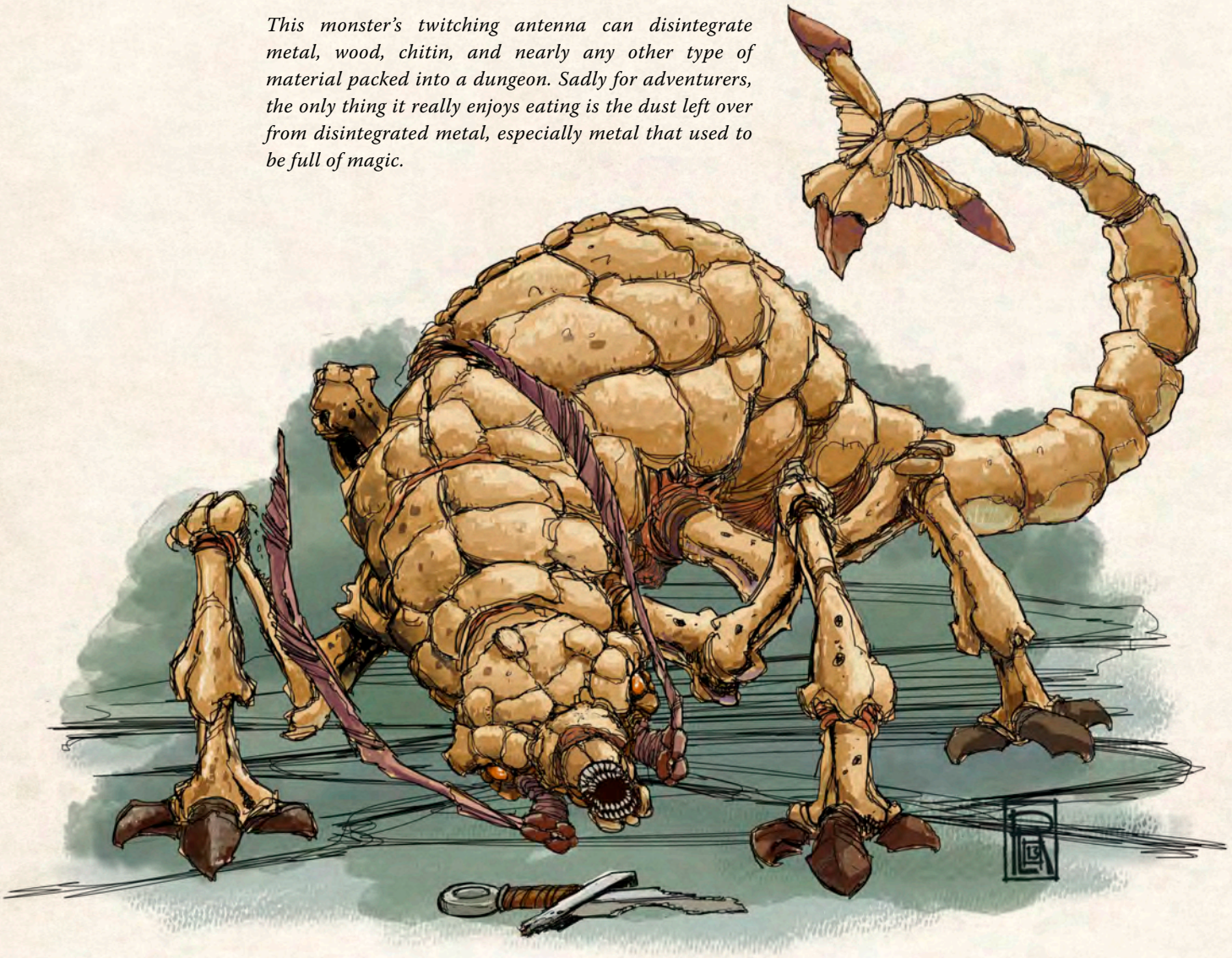
Call Me Ishamael—A noble brought home a fuzzy white caterpillar thing as a pet for his children, but threw it down the privy when it turned into an ugly barbellite. Now it has grown into a frost-würm! The sewers have frozen (forcing undesirable creatures up onto the streets) and it is regularly emerging from under the city to snack on citizens. The noble asks the adventurers to help him hunt the Great White Würm.

Land of Mantumbi—Lost jungles have been reported found under the ice, cities of sapphire and gold, but remorhaz tunnels are the only way to get there. What treasures await those willing to try their luck?

The Merchant Who Came in from the Cold—A trader has decided that she can use harmless "snow-kittens" as a way to freeze food. She just needs adventurers to go get her some. Easy, *right?*

RUST MONSTER

This monster's twitching antenna can disintegrate metal, wood, chitin, and nearly any other type of material packed into a dungeon. Sadly for adventurers, the only thing it really enjoys eating is the dust left over from disintegrated metal, especially metal that used to be full of magic.



Old & Nasty

For some gamers, the rust monster is a shout back to the early adversarial days of our hobby, back when a monster that consumed metal was the perfect tool for a GM who had let the PC's treasure get out of control. For other gamers, the shout-back is an angry curse against an irritating monster that threatens fun.

We're compromising the two with a limited curse. We're not sure if the rust monster is particularly fun but we can see that it has a place in some campaigns, or perhaps only in some sessions. The rust monster's place is a bit more specific than the range occupied by most monsters. We originally created stats for many variants but in the end we decided to limit the damage to just two. Rust monsters are such a hateful element of the fantastic ecology that they probably work best in a specific campaign niche rather than as a threat that keeps surfacing because the monster stats are in the book for the correct level.

As you'll see from our story text, we think of rust monsters as quite rare. We believe they're best used as a threat toward the end of the adventurer tier. By that time the PCs will have magical weapons and armor they're going to be terrified of losing. Keeping rust monsters as a problem for adventurer- and champion-tier heroes means that they aren't being phrased as an epic threat unless you somehow decide that your world needs to end with rust monsters consuming the world.

There is No Ecology of the Rust Monster

Obviously many articles and web sites disagree with that sentiment. But what we're suggesting as the default setting for *13th Age* games is that rust monsters don't survive long in the surface world because *almost* everyone hates them. Think of the rust monster as the equivalent of chemical weapons in the present day world; some magicians might investigate ways of using them, but getting caught makes everyone your enemy.

So when rust monsters show up, it's most often because they've just surfaced in a living dungeon. Alternatively, the PCs might have delved deep down into the underworld where no one has gotten around to killing the monsters. Or someone with more than one screw loose has brought them into the world, which highlights the only creatures that have no problem using rust monsters: demons. Demons already hate everything and everyone, and most everyone hates them back. Rust monsters? Not a big deal to a demon.

Rust Monster

This odd creature will make quick work of your belt buckle and your dagger, then your axe, and finally your chainmail. It might even sniff around in your pack for a little dessert.

3rd level spoiler [ABERRATION]
Initiative: +5

Caustic bite +8 vs. AC (one creature wearing light armor or no armor)—10 damage, and 5 ongoing acid damage
Natural 16+: The target is now considered to be wearing no armor (the armor is damaged beyond repair; adjust defenses accordingly). If the target's armor is magical, the target must roll a hard save (16+). On a success, the armor isn't affected. This effect is permanent until the creature obtains new armor.

Rusting antenna +8 vs. PD (one creature wearing heavy armor)—1 damage, and the target is now considered to be wearing no armor (the armor is damaged beyond repair; adjust defenses accordingly). If the target's armor is magical, the target must roll a hard save (16+). On a success, the armor isn't affected. This effect is permanent until the creature obtains new armor.

Corrupting body: Whenever a creature hits the rust monster with a melee weapon, the attacker must roll a save; on a failure, the weapon is destroyed. Magic weapons require an easy save (6+) instead. This effect is permanent.

Rust's targets: Magic items wielded by creatures with 60 hp or more are not affected by the rust monster's ability to destroy items (but the target still takes damage).

"Keep that thing away from the tombs."
—Salvador, minor vampire, addressing his minions

Saving quirks: Before rolling a save for a magic item, a PC can gain a +5 bonus to the save by agreeing to roleplay the item's quirk as a huge element of their personality until the next full heal-up. Failure to live up to this roleplaying agreement means that the item hasn't received the support it needs from its owner to survive the rust monster's destructive effects, and the item is destroyed at the end of the next battle even if its owner successfully saved.

Nastier Specials

Big antenna: When the rust monster scores a critical hit, it can try to destroy another random magic item in the target's possession (or a random normal item if the target has no other magic items). The creature must roll a save for the item, as usual.

AC 19
PD 17 **HP 45**
MD 13

Rust Monsters in Combat

Prior to using rust monsters in a battle, be sure to track of the types of armor the characters are wearing so that you know which characters the rust monsters will pursue and which characters will be most affected by the rust monsters' attacks.

NPC and monster stats don't track if they're wearing heavy or light armor. Each time a rust monster bites an NPC/monster wearing armor with any metal components, that creature takes a cumulative –2 penalty to AC (–4 max).

If a rust monster destroys an NPC's/monster's weapon and that creature has no other way to make attacks, its unarmed attacks deal only a quarter of the creature's normal weapon damage.

Rust Monster Obliterator

This demonic rust monster is hellbent on devouring metal, flesh, and bone. The strange whirligig spoil at the end of its tail provides bizarre protection against mystical elements.

5th level spoiler [DEMON]
Initiative: +8

Caustic bite +10 vs. AC (one creature wearing light armor or no armor)—18 damage, and 5 ongoing acid damage
Natural 14+: The target is now considered to be wearing no armor (the armor is damaged beyond repair; adjust defenses accordingly). If the target's armor is magical, the target must roll a hard save (16+). On a success, the armor isn't affected. This effect is permanent until the creature obtains new armor.

Rusting antenna +10 vs. PD (one creature wearing heavy armor)—10 damage, and the target is now considered to be wearing no armor (the armor is damaged beyond repair; adjust defenses accordingly). If the target's armor is magical, the target must roll a hard save (16+). On a success, the armor isn't affected. This effect is permanent until the creature obtains new armor.

Each time the rust monster obliterator destroys heavy armor with this attack, it gains a different random demon ability until the end of the battle (see random demon ability chart below and roll 1d8 to determine the ability; reroll duplicate abilities).

Corrupting body: Whenever a creature hits the rust monster with a melee weapon, the attacker must roll a save; on a failure, the weapon is destroyed. Magic weapons require an easy save (6+) instead. This effect is permanent.

Rust's targets: Magic items wielded by creatures with 100 hp or more are not affected by the rust monster's ability to destroy items (but the target still takes damage).

Saving quirks: Before rolling a save for a magic item, a PC can gain a +5 bonus to the save by agreeing to roleplay the item's quirk as a huge element of their personality until the next full heal-up. Failure to live up to this roleplaying agreement means that the item hasn't received the support it needs from its owner to survive the rust monster's destructive effects, and the item is destroyed at the end of the next battle even if its owner saved.

Nastier Specials

Tail whirligig: When an enemy targets the rust monster obliterator with a spell, the rust monster rolls a save. On a success, the spell has no effect on the rust monster. If the rust monster is staggered, it must roll a hard save (16+) instead.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 72**
MD	15	

Random Demon Abilities Reminder (D8)

1: *True seeing*
2: *Resist fire 18+*
3: *Invisibility* when first staggered
4: *Resist energy 12+*
5: *Fear aura*
6: *Teleport 1d3 times each battle*
7: *Demonic speed*
8: *Gate in allied demon*

Building Battles

Rust monsters are scary because they can destroy magic items. But if you only throw one at a group, they'll probably take it down quick, and if you throw a group of them at the PCs, the heroes might survive but be walking around naked after the battle. Depending on whether you want to give them a good scare, or put the fear of the Diabolist in them, either option can work, but know that losing multiple items will frustrate players.

Also consider having one rust monster enter a battle between the PCs and some humanoid monsters with armor/weapons. Do the PCs worry about the enemies dealing heavy damage to them, or the monster that can eat their fancy armor? Perhaps the rust monster is targeting both sides randomly. Do they hold off attacking it?

Rust monster obliterators are usually encountered with demons. Nothing makes a demon heavily focused on ranged attacks (like a despoiler) happier than to see the paladin, barbarian, and fighter looking at each other to see who's first in when it has a semi-trained obliterator (or two) on a thick leather leash in hand.

Rust Monsters and the Icons

None of the icons have fuzzy feelings about rust monsters. We'll use this space for odd possibilities that might or might not be true in your campaign.

Archmage: Wizards researching the basic secret of alchemy, the creation of gold, have sometimes conceived of research into rust monster magic as an approach to their problem from the opposite direction. Such wizards are as far from understanding alchemy as they are near to destroying their laboratories.

Diabolist: In most of our campaigns, the Diabolist does not share her demons' willingness to use rust monsters. After all, the Diabolist does build a few things she'd like to see endure. If the Crusader is pushing the Diabolist extremely hard in your campaign, it's possible that rust monster obliterators are her desperate attempt to balance the odds.

High Druid: The High Druid has no tolerance for creatures that only surface as denizens of living dungeons. Rumors that she is somehow soft on rust monsters are a master-stroke of Imperial propagandists, banking on the fact that those not personally familiar with the Druid's people can sometimes be convinced that she thinks all monsters are natural.

Adventure Hooks

Adventurers will most often encounter rust monsters in the underworld or in living dungeons. Since demons don't kill obliterators on sight (unless they feel like it), PCs are likely to encounter one or more in hellholes.

Crusading Difficulties—The Crusader's forces have nearly pacified a hellhole, but they're having enormous difficulties with a demon nest employing rust monsters to eliminate the armor advantage of the Crusader's troops. If the PCs help, the Crusader's people promise to cut them in on the next serious looting opportunity—perhaps a nearby temple quietly devoted to the Priestess.

The Not-quite-living Dungeon—A living dungeon entirely overrun by rust monsters lurches and collapses in fitful starts, falling apart as the rust monsters continually eat away at it. If it makes it to the surface, it's going to be some sort of regenerating horror dungeon, so killing the rust-monster-riddled death-trap sooner rather than later is a huge necessity.

SAHUAGIN

Conflicting rumors and legends paint extremely different pictures of the sahuagins' origins and final allegiance. Somehow none of that matters when they've chained you to a rock, slit you open, and summoned the sharks.

sahuagin raider

What Everyone Knows about Sahuagin

Sahuagin are humanoids with scaly skin, fish-eyes, and webbed hands and feet. They are strikingly fast swimmers and think of themselves as the most dangerous creatures in the near-surface oceanic world.

Sahuagin prey on ships and on isolated coastal settlements. They've been known to establish temporary coastal colonies of their own, more often claiming and renovating ruins rather than building their own structures. They build weapons and armor out of items from the sea or from items gained in raids on land-dwellers. (Their degree of cultural development and technology is a matter for each campaign to decide.)

The basic stats for a sahuagin appeared on page 245 of the *13th Age* core book. Since those stats were only half a page long, we duplicated them in this entry with the rest of the champion-tier sahuagin to make it simpler for you to have the stats in one book instead of two.

Where the Sahuagin Roam

Our default setting for *13th Age* assumes that travel on the Midland Sea is seldom troubled by dangerous sahuagin or any other monsters. The pacification of the Midland Sea drove the truly dangerous sahuagin into the rivers, particularly in the area known as the Fangs, as well as into the Iron Sea.

Monsters that are 1st or 2nd level might be dangerous but aren't truly threatening to civilization, so if you'd like to use sahuagin in the Midland Sea, use the low-level sahuagin presented below. Make use of the champion-tier sahuagin when the PCs are traversing the Empire's rivers or the Iron Sea . . . or as an unmistakable sign that the Midland Sea's wards are failing.

Along the southern coast of the Iron Sea, however, sahuagin are a constant menace to the Empire's Sea Wall defenses. Most of the breaches and large-scale invasions involve enormous monsters and demons, but the sahuagin are more involved than they should be. Those who understand the language of demons say that the sahuagin speak as if killing defenders on the Sea Wall was a form of religious devotion, a mark of initiation or pilgrimage that every sahuagin aspires to. Imperial legionnaires hope that these claims are only more lies spread by minions of the Diabolist.

Two or Three Story Options

The sahuagin stats below should work no matter how you decide to phrase the sahuagin story. The *Bestiary's* creative team is split on how it wants to think of sahuagin, so we figure we're going to pass those options on to you.

Rob Wieland sees sahuagin as possible descendants of drowned Sahua, an Atlantis-like city that might have been somewhere in the Midland Sea, or the Iron Sea, or somewhere else entirely.

Rob Wieland and Ken Hite both see sahuagin as potential agents of what we'll refer to as "that-Innsmouth-thing"—potential agents of inbred deepish ones whose descendants transform coastal towns into monster habitat.

Rob Heinsoo unimaginatively sticks to what he thinks of as a traditional view of sahuagin as demon-worshipping raiders of the deeps, justifying his position with a nod to the idea that sahuagin might be some sort of embodiment of the anger of the Iron Sea, particularly in light of their ongoing assaults against the Sea Wall. Maybe some version of "drowned Sahua" is involved. Maybe not.

Editor Cal Moore likes the idea that sahuagin of the Iron Sea worship some sort of ancient god of the deep sea and follow some strange dark religion only they understand, but with no inbreeding involved.

Jonathan Tweet dislikes sahuagin so much that he seems never to have bothered learning how to pronounce their name, so at least we don't need to spend time catering to Jonathan's distaste.

So the story material that shows up after the sahuagin stats is a deliberately jumbled bag. The icon connections and adventure hooks come from several different perspectives and won't all work together smoothly. You probably shouldn't use all approaches in a single campaign, and you may have your own ideas. The oceans are a deliberately under-developed portion of the world in the *13th Age* core book, so there's plenty of room for big ideas if that's the type of thing you want your campaign to get into.

Sahuagin Raider

The sahuagin who manage to evade the wards in the Midland Sea are furious that they look like twisted runts alongside their cousins from the Iron Sea and the Fangs.

2nd level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +4

Coral-tipped spear +6 vs. AC—6 damage
Natural even hit against a stuck or hampered enemy: The target takes 1d6 extra damage.

R: Hooked net +6 vs. PD—3 damage
Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).
Natural odd hit: The target is stuck (save ends).
Limited use: 1/battle.

Blood rage: The sahuagin raider gains a +2 attack bonus while it's staggered.

Water breather: Sahuagin breathe underwater and swim very well.

AC 18 | PD 14 | MD 13 | **HP 34**

Razor Shark

Long exposure to the sahuagin notion of "domestication" should have made razor sharks completely freaking insane except that they're not smart enough to realize that potential.

2nd level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +6

Razortoothed jaws +7 vs. AC—4 damage
Natural even hit: Increase the damage by +1 for each razor shark mook that has dropped this battle.
Natural even miss: The target and the razor shark each take 1d6 damage.

Frenzy (group): When two or more razor sharks in the same mob are dropped to 0 hp by an attack, as a free action each dropped razor shark attacks one random nearby non-razor shark creature before it dies. That creature takes 1d8 damage.

Water breather: Sharks breathe underwater and swim very well. They're not so good out of sea water (even if they jump), so treat them as semi-hazardous terrain while they're busy thrashing to death outside the water.

AC 17 | PD 14 | MD 11 | **HP 10 (mook)**

Mook: Kill one razor shark mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

Sahuagin from core rules for easy reference:

Sahuagin

In the Fangs, sahuagin are murderously furious that they cannot dwell within the Midland Sea. In the Iron Sea, sahuagin are murderously furious that there are humanoids on land who aren't dead yet.

5th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Trident and bite +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—10 damage
Natural 20: Increase the escalation die by 1, and the target is hampered (*makes only basic attacks*) until the end of its next turn.

R: Barbed crossbow +9 vs. AC (one nearby enemy, or a far away enemy at –2 atk)—10 damage, and 5 ongoing damage

Blood frenzy: Make a note of the escalation die when the sahuagin becomes staggered. The sahuagin gains a bonus to its melee attacks and damage equal to the escalation die value for the rest of the battle.

Water breather: Sahuagin breathe underwater and swim very well.

Nastier Specials
Demon-touched: Roll a d6 on the Demon Random Abilities table (page 233). The sahuagin gains that ability.

AC	**20**	
PD	19	**HP 70**
MD	16	

Sahuagin Glow Priest

The lights in the deep don't belong to the Gods of Light.

5th level caster [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +10

Coral rod +10 vs. AC—12 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The priest teleports the target next to one of its nearby allies that it can see, who engages it as a free action. It can't teleport the target to a location that causes it direct damage (so into a pool of flaming oil is out, but off a ship into the sea is fine).

> *"Beware the steely bastard who pays you in sahuagin gold. Even if you melt it down to get rid of all the strange markings, there's still a slickness to it unlike any other coin. It rubs against the other coins in a purse incorrectly and frays the tips of your fingers. Best to spend it quickly at a dockside dive to send it back home."*
> *—Edgar the Edge, rogue*

R: Glowpriest's prayer +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—12 psychic damage, and if the attack hits 2 or more targets, roll 1d8 after the attack for the prayer's effect
1–2 (Hymm of hate): One random nearby conscious enemy takes 4d6 negative energy damage.
3–4 (Curse of despair): Each target that was hit takes a –2 penalty (non-cumulative) to all saves until the end of the battle.
5–6 (Scream of victory): Until the start of the glowpriest's next turn, each sahuagin and demon in the battle adds the escalation die to its attacks and the PCs don't. GM: A story guide icon success with the Diabolist might let a PC get around this penalty.
7–8 (Word of refuge): Remove the glowpriest from play. At the start of its next turn, return it to play nearby its original location. It gains a +4 bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn after it returns to play.

Water breather: Sahuagin breathe underwater and swim very well.

AC	**21**	
PD	16	**HP 70**
MD	19	

Iron Sea Shark

They're thick around the transitional waters of the Koru Straights. They hug the coastline around Cape Thunder, wedge themselves deep into the bay at Shark Tooth, and hunt past the ruins of Proud Fort, as if they were hoping to gnaw their way back to the Iron Sea.

Double-strength 5th level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +6

Massive iron jaws +10 vs. AC—14 damage
Miss: 2d6 damage.

Frenzy: While staggered, if the iron sea shark is unengaged at the start of its turn, it must roll an easy save (6+). On a failure, the shark must move and attack a random nearby enemy that's staggered, or a random nearby creature if there are no staggered enemies.

Shredder: When an enemy misses with a melee attack against an iron sea shark and rolls a natural 1–5, the attacker takes 2d6 damage.

Water breather: Sharks breathe underwater and swim very well. They're not so good out of sea water (even if they jump), so treat them as semi-hazardous terrain while they're busy thrashing to death outside the water.

AC	**22**	
PD	19	**HP 32 (mook)**
MD	14	

Mook: Kill one iron sea shark mook for every 32 damage you deal to the mob.

sahuagin mutant

Sahuagin Mutant

There may be stranger sahuagin mutants in the deeps, but the ones that swim to the surface to kill you simply have twice the number of arms and teeth.

Large 6th level wrecker [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +12

Four-armed frenzy +11 vs. AC (1d4 attacks)—15 damage
Natural 4, 8, 12, 16, 20: The target takes 10 ongoing damage.

R: Heavy crossbow +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—30 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 10 ongoing damage.

Limited escalator: The sahuagin mutant adds the escalation die to its attacks until the die is 5+.

Water breather: Sahuagin breathe underwater and swim very well.

Nastier Specials

Punisher: When an enemy intercepts the sahuagin mutant, it takes 4d8 damage from the mutant's claws and teeth.

Ripper: When an enemy makes a melee attack against the sahuagin mutant and rolls a natural odd miss, that enemy takes 2d8 damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	20	**HP 200**
MD	15	

Building Battles

Sahuagin think of other humanoids as meat and would rather not ally with food. Perhaps demonic leaders could coerce sahuagin followers into temporarily working alongside meat-people, but such arrangements won't hold for long.

Sharks, other aquatic monsters, and demons are the most likely creatures to fight alongside sahuagin.

Campaign Option: Thrice-great Sahua, Driven Beneath the Waves

Use the following ideas if you're amused by associating the sahuagin with an ancient sunken city.

Preamble: Every sailor has heard of the city under the sea. It starts out as tales told to children still learning their knots. Beware the sahuagin, young one. They are as much man as beast. Living beneath the waves. Guarding the treasures of their long-lost city. Using sunken ships laden with gold to draw fools into the water. Fish-men fishing with the shiniest of lures. Don't fall over the side, lest your screams of help go unheard by the sailors. Your thrashing and flailing will draw sahuagin in search of a fleshy meal of soft skin and unsalted blood.

The story of drowned Sahua shifts depending on which liquor a sailor is drinking. If you're running a drinking table, we

suppose your campaign could follow suit. Otherwise, ignore the beverage labels and choose the versions that suit you.

Saved by Drowning: Sahua was the greatest city of an early age before it was doomed to destruction. An icon "saved" the city from a worse fate by sinking it and transforming its population into creatures that could survive the deeps. Prophecy may still be unfolding or the sahuagins' fall into demon-worship may be as bad as it gets.

Blame the Wizard King: The same terrible error that made the Iron Sea the enemy of the land drowned ancient Sahua. Therefore the ancient Wizard King is to blame, and sahuagin still seem to hate wizards most.

The Island Empire: Sahua was an island-chain empire as well as a city. It might have been volcanoes that sunk it, or maybe demons. Probably both. The sahuagin themselves don't know whether they are descended from the people of the islands or from the demons who sank those islands.

Sleeping Gods: Sahua still exists in some weird fragment of the overworld over the Iron Sea. The original Sahua was a temple-city where sailors made offerings to the many gods of the sea for protection on their journeys. A cult devoted to a slumbering god beneath the sea destroyed or corrupted the other temples one by one over the centuries. The cultists' god awoke for a brief moment and blessed the cult by dragging its most devoted followers to the cold deeps to be closer to it, turning them into sahuagin. The sahuagin work for the day when their god wakes up forever and feasts upon the icons and their flimsy half-created world.

Mix and Match: Several of these stories are rumored to be true. Let your campaign sort it out if that storyline is one you wish to pursue.

Campaign Option: Sahuagin Gold

Gold from Sahua, or from shipwrecks caused (or merely looted) by sahuagin is not like other gold. Use options below which appeal to you or your group.

Stamp of Evil: Coins that the sahuagin possess for more than a month change shape into a form that suits the sahuagin. It might be a strange shape connected to aquatic demons. It might be ancient stamps from the city-state of Sahua. It might be the imprint of a demonic prince. Go with an option that suits your campaign. What's certain is that no one mistakes sahuagin gold for anyone else's gold. For reasons of her own, the Diabolist might favor the coins.

Obsession: Those who hold sahuagin gold complain of strange dreams of the sea—lucid nightmares of wandering Sahua. When the dreamer realizes they can't breathe, they awaken. Every night is the same dream of the streets of a sunken city. A lack of sleep leads to a constant fatigue, and soon Sahua leaks into waking hallucinations and madness. The only way to end the dreams is to return the gold to Sahua itself. Of course, this means finding the lost city first. We're not providing mechanics for this obsession. Use it as a story element for susceptible NPCs if you like. It's not the type of thing we'd hit PCs with unless that was the point of your campaign.

Curse of the Change: Some say that owning too much sahuagin gold transforms a person into a sahuagin. Supposedly you transform one body part or section of flesh at a time and can reverse the curse by returning all your sahuagin gold, along with an equal amount of Imperial gold, to the sea after offering prayers to demons whose names you'd be better off not having learned.

Campaign Option: Deeper Ones

We've mentioned a couple options for invoking curses that allow sahuagin to function as vectors for transformations that gradually alter the populations of coastal regions.

If we were going to place such populations along a coastline of the Midland Sea, it would be the Demon Coast or possibly along Shark Tooth bay. Near the Iron Sea, the wrong side of the Sea Wall seems perfect for townships that seek to escape the "tyranny" of the Empire and somehow fail to be destroyed by the encroachments of the Iron Sea . . . because they're already gone, baby, sunk deep.

Beware Those Who Don't Fear the Sea

"The sailors on the Sea Sprite are more unpleasant than usual. They sing low, guttural songs and stare at me with unblinking eyes. Father warned me sailors have their way, but their longing looks feature a sinister color that disquiets me. I expressed displeasure to the captain, who assured me he took on most of the men in the local port."

"OUr SHIpp waas puLLED under to A BEAUTIFUL WORLD WHERE I WILL Bee QUEEN ONCE I LEARN To SIng WIth THE WAVES."

—Messages found inside a bottle that washed ashore on the Wake Islands.

Sahuagin and the Icons

Archmage: The lost city of Sahua intrigues the Archmage as a glimpse of previous ages and as a source of forgotten knowledge. Technically the Archmage also believes that treasures drowned for ages beneath the waves no longer qualify as treasures-from-the-earth, so that the Archmage's magical claim on ancient artifacts is superior to the Dwarf King's claim. One would think that if an earlier Archmage had been responsible for the sinking of Sahua, the current Archmage would have a better idea where to find it. So this may count as evidence in the Archmage's favor.

Dwarf King: There may be some truth to the story that shipwrecks and sahuagin treasure help break treasure's connection to the earth. Or perhaps the Dwarf King simply despises demon worshippers. In either case, sahuagin who ride underground rivers into the shallow underworld generally find it easier to travel deeper than the dwarves can presently safely follow, rather than face conflicts with agents of the dwarves.

Dwarves hate sahuagin gold, but they claim that reforging it into good coin or jewelry in their workshops is enough to break any curse that might be on it.

Emperor: The Empire made its position on control of the seas clear when the Blessed Emperor pacified the Midland Sea. The sahuagin who still raid in the Midland Sea aren't thriving and are often hunted for sport or training by Imperial patrols.

The sahuagin of the rivers and the Iron Sea are another problem. They consider themselves at war with the Empire, but the Empire rules the land and sometimes the air and the sahuagin take to the waves.

High Druid: It's possible that all nature is the High Druid's provenance, but this Druid (and most of her predecessors) have little to do with the world's vast oceans. She has no inside information on the sahuagins' motives or plans.

Whatever their true origins, the sahuagin are demon-worshippers bent on destroying the world the High Druid cherishes. The Druid's followers are happy to hunt down any sahuagin that make it past the Sea Wall.

Ideally, the High Druid would love to flush the sahuagin from the rivers, but the great magic worked by the Blessed Emperor sacrificed many rivers such as the Fangs in order to tame the Midland Sea, and so far that magic has been too powerful to reverse.

It's worth noting that the wastes left by the passage of living dungeons are often flushed to the deeper underworld by opportunistic rivers. Such rivers are nearly always temporary, so sahuagin traveling those rivers don't strike the High Druid as much of a problem, at least not compared to the cleansing effects of the rivers. That puts her somewhat at odds with the Dwarf King, but both icons agree that the living dungeons are the larger problem, so the disagreement is usually not violent.

Orc Lord: The Orc Lord has no problem with sahuagin gold, no matter how cursed. He also sees most humanoids as meat. A useful metaphor for the possible relationship between the Orc Lord and the sahuagin comes straight from WWII in the relationship between Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Neither of those murderous states would have had any tolerance for each other if they had been neighbors. But they weren't neighbors, and they were at odds with most of the same people. Simplify matters, eliminate most of the diplomacy, and you've got a model for two violent groups that don't mind playing off each other's offensives when that suits them.

Adventure Hooks

Pirates of Sahua—What is this new emblem flying from the masts of murderous semi-human pirates? It seems modeled after the coins brought up from sahuagin lairs.

Some Watery Hellhole—Trace the most problematic rivers of the Empire to their source and you might find an ancient hellhole, engineered by the Diabolist or her arcanists to function as a site populated by sahuagin and shark demons. Think of trout-fishing lakes stocked by government or sport-fishing groups—that's the sahuagin hellhole story, except that it's the ones on surface who should be worried.

The Canals of Omen—Omen might be overrun by full-strength sahuagin at times, particularly if they have reached the surface riding a living dungeon. From their lookout at Vigil, servants of the Priestess and Archmage are seeing the beginnings what appears to be a sort of canal-building project undertaken by sahuagin and demon overlords.

The Koru Straits Ferry—The short trip across the Koru Straits is quite a bit more dangerous than longer routes in the Midland Sea, but it's fast. The captain of a barge has hired the PCs as impromptu bodyguards for his latest crossing. Of course, horrible sahuagin from the Iron Sea rise in waves to try to drag the inhabitants to the deeps half way across.

They're dragons that live in shadows, and might be made of shadows. They are planners and plotters, who enjoy using cursed items and covert schemes rather than outright confrontation.

SHADOW DRAGON

They're dragons that live in shadows, and might be made of shadows. They are planners and plotters who enjoy using cursed items and covert schemes rather than outright confrontation.

The True Origins of Shadow Dragons

Shadow dragons conceal their origins. Any of the following options could be true:

- *"Shadow dragons are . . . dragon spirits returned from the grave."* —Karnäk the Evershade
- *"When dragons becomes very wise we shed our physical forms."* —Tötus-Kree Blacksoul
- *"It's a curse laid upon dragonkind by jealous gods."* —Glamrög Mindcutter
- *"Immortality, something beyond and better than lichdom. A shadow dragon is a being that has become a dream."* —Tênebirous, Ruler of the Night
- *"Shadow dragons hatch from the nightmares of kings."* —Xänthes the Darkdoom

What is certain is that shadow dragons are made of shadow and that shadow thieves serve them. Shadow thieves steal items from adventurers and sew dungeons with cursed items, then the shadow dragons direct their enemies toward those dungeons. They also psychically feed on fear and pain, and to fuel their hunger they arrange monster attacks on settlements to soak those emotions up. They value knowledge and power over gold.

Shadow dragon coloration runs toward purple and gold, but when they move they look like slithering colorless darkness.

"No! I'm not saying the dragon came out of the shadows . . . it WAS the shadows! You've got to believe me! Please!"
—Cellco Greenwife, peasant, explaining how her village was destroyed

Shadow Dragon

Its huge but undefined form flickers from shadow to shadow. One moment it's there, and then it's gone.

Large 8th level caster [DRAGON]
Initiative: +13

Shadow claws +13 vs. AC—50 psychic damage
Natural 16+: The target is confused (hard save ends, 16+).

C: Nightmare breath +12 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)—60 negative energy damage, and the target becomes a living shadow (hard save ends, 16+)
Living shadow: While a living shadow, the target can't physically interact with or gain aid from companions or aid them (including healing, bonuses, and effects) but is otherwise "normal."
Limited use: 1/battle, but the ability recharges when the dragon is staggered. If it hasn't already made a *nightmare breath* attack when it becomes staggered, the dragon makes the attack as a free action and then the breath recharges.

Made of shadow: The shadow dragon perceives the invisible, is unaffected by the *blur* spell, and ignores illusions. Rogues attempting to *shadow walk* near a shadow dragon end up in the dragon's belly (save ends). While there, they are helpless and take 2d12 damage at the start of each of their turns until they save and fall back out of shadow.

Shadowy escalation: When in poorly lit areas of shadow, the dragon adds the escalation die to its attack rolls. Complete darkness or bright daylight negates the ability.

Nastier Specials
Shadow illusions: As a standard action, the dragon can appear to be humanoid, usually disguising itself as an unthreatening old man in a cloak (DC 35 to detect). Daylight will show the illusion for what it is—an insubstantial dragon. Dragons with a *Book of Many Faces* will have perfect humanoid disguises. Dropping the illusion is a free action.

Shadowy phasing: When the escalation die is even, natural odd attack rolls against the dragon automatically miss. When the escalation die is odd, natural even attack rolls against the dragon automatically miss. Attacks that deal holy damage ignore this ability.

AC 25
PD 22 **HP 260**
MD 22

Shadow Thief

Vaguely humanoid, winged, and two-dimensional. A psychic extension of the dragon, it slithers along the wall and wraps long fingers around your shadow's neck. Suddenly it's very hard to breathe.

8th level mook [DRAGON]
Initiative: +17

Shadow strangulation +13 vs. PD—20 psychic damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 20 negative energy damage, and the shadow thief can make a *shadow possession* attack as a free action (but see *group ability*).

[Group ability] **C: Shadow possession +13 vs. MD (one enemy hit by *shadow strangulation*)**—The shadow thief "crawls inside" the target. The target is confused (save ends), and the shadow thief can't be the target of an attack or effect until it's forced from the target's body when that creature saves against the confusion effect.

Group ability: For every four shadow thieves in the battle (round up), one of them can use *shadow possession* during the battle.

Shadow thievery: The shadow thief is an extension of the shadow dragon, not really a separate entity. When it drops to 0 hp, it flees back to the shadow dragon and merges with it. When this happens, if there is at least one enemy engaged with that shadow thief, the thief chooses one enemy engaged with it. Roll a d20; on a 16+, the shadow thief steals a random magic item from the chosen enemy as it flees back to the dragon (but see *stop . . . thief* below). Stolen items are replaced with shadowy duplicates that work until the end of the battle then fade to nothingness. The items can be recovered if the dragon is slain in the same battle.

Stop . . . thief! When a shadow thief steals an item, the creature it steals from can choose to prevent the theft, but at a cost. If the natural d20 thievery roll was odd, the target of the thievery attempt can choose to keep the item but become hampered (save ends) as they wrestle with the shadow. If the natural thievery roll was even, the target has the same choice, but it's a hard save (16+) to end the hampered effect.

AC 25
PD 20 **HP 38 (mook)**
MD 16

Mook: Kill one shadow thief mook for every 38 damage you deal to the mob.

"Ten thousand electrum coins to whoever returns the king's amulet along with the head of the shadow dragon that stole it and filled the ruined keep at Granite Top with gelatinous cubes."
—Tarth Stonefoot, royal messenger

Building Battles

Some shadow dragons prefer only their own company and that of their shadow thieves, having interesting conversations among themselves. Many realize, however, that to acquire more magic items and to draw heroes to their dungeons, the word needs to get out. They will often work with drow sneaks who know the shadows well, rewarding those shadowy servants who send adventurers the dragon's way with the occasional magic item. For their part the drow are not beyond seeding areas near dwarven mines with cursed items to bring ruin upon their foes.

Shadow dragons also have good relations with hags. Sometimes a shadow thief will steal a nightmare from its victim if it has no magic items. The lands of dreams and shadow are not so disconnected, and both creatures understand the power of nightmares, often trading with each other for nightmares they have yet to savor.

On Holy Ground

While on "holy ground" such as a temple or consecrated shrine, all hard saves against shadow dragon effects become normal saves. As a standard action, a cleric who invokes the gods can produce a similar anti-shadow effect in the nearby area until the start of their next turn, or they can turn hard saves against shadow dragon abilities to easy saves if that area is already on holy ground. Shadow dragons try to avoid holy ground, and shadow thieves can only enter it while possessing victims and will flee once the possession ends. It's up to the GM what counts as "holy ground" in their game.

Things Found in a Shadow Dragon's Lair

Book of pork recipes on a shelf containing an extensive genealogy of notable halflings (many of whom are missing). Priceless 3rd Age statue. Chest of neatly arranged coins, containing one of every denomination issued anywhere for the past 1,000 years. Collection of tiny dead humans, pickled in labeled jars. Chart showing the movement of invisible moons, and an optical apparatus that allows them to be seen. Genealogies of the ten poorest families in Concord (showing they descended from nobles) with notations detailing how the dragon interfered to bring the families low. List of names, dates, and grudges. Astrological charts for every doxy, trull, and trollop in Shadow Port. Extensive diagrams showing the rat-runs of ten seemingly random houses in Axis. Carefully indexed reports on the bowel movements of the inhabitants of the Red Tower in Horizon, in a box containing empty jars labeled with alchemical symbols. Hundreds of tiny pouches of powdered platinum, at the bottom of each pouch are magically preserved silk-worms. Beautiful map of the Empire rendered on the floor in swirls of colored dust. Old-looking treasure maps, the material the dragon used to make them, and detailed diagrams of the traps it has laid for adventurers. Treaties the dragon has brokered between monsters. Emeralds arranged in bags according to luster. Intricate 100-year plans to take over the Empire, half complete.

True Magic Items

Shadow dragons covet knowledge, secrets, and hidden power. They look down on "lesser" dragons that hoard gold. Shadow dragon lairs tend to be lonely places full of books, but some do keep and use magic items to help them gain knowledge.

Orb of Mind Control (implement): A pearlescent stone sphere. *Always:* Attacks and damage with spells: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic). *1/day:* As a standard action, you cast *charm person* against a nearby creature as a 3rd level spell (champion: 5th level spell; epic: 7th level spell). *Quirk:* Keen to be liked.

Tome of Magpies (implement): A metal-bound book. *Always:* Attacks and damage with spells: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic). *1/day:* You summon magpies to steal objects for you—make an Intelligence skill check with a normal DC for your tier to see if you get the non-magical items you want, or useless junk. *Quirk:* Overly wary of pickpockets.

Tome of Many Faces (implement): A heavy book constructed from some type (?) of leather. *Always:* Attacks and damage with spells: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic). *1/day:* You change your appearance, physically becoming another humanoid entirely (stats, abilities, powers, etc. don't change) and gain a +5 bonus to checks to imitate a specific humanoid. You can revert to your normal appearance as a quick action. (Shadow dragons often use these books to pass unnoticed among humanoids.) *Quirk:* Needs to look at reflection often.

Skeletal Key (implement): A small ivory key. A*lways:* Attacks and damage with arcane spells: +1 (adventurer); +2 (champion). *1/day:* While not in battle, you can open and/or mystically keep open for 2d6 x 10 minutes any closed "thing" that is not magically sealed (doors, mouths, taverns, wounds, minds)—anything that can be "opened" in some way is fair game (GM play it as you see fit). *Quirk:* Nervous about being attacked while sleeping.

Curses and Hexes

Shadow dragons have their servants sow the paths of adventurers with cursed items they hope will weaken or distract potential foes. Adventurers approaching a shadow dragon lair should encounter at least one of these items during the trip. Each of these items initially seems to be useful until it attunes itself to the wielder. Detecting the curse requires a DC 35 Intelligence check, but effects vary based on the roll.

30 or less:	Nothing seems to be wrong. Go ahead and attune the item.
31–34:	Something isn't right about the item. It could be cursed, or just has a bad quirk.
35+ or natural 20:	The item is cursed!
Natural roll is 1–5:	The creature attempting to discern the item's magic accidentally attunes to the cursed item!

Most cursed items are intelligent and mock their unfortunate owners aloud. All cursed items are extremely hard to get rid of (they teleport back to the owner, are nearly impossible to destroy using conventional means, can't be sold or given away, etc.). Cursed items count as regular magic items where chakras and attunement are concerned, and will force items for similar chakras to unattune from their owner so the cursed item can take its place. Also, if an

effect would cause one or more of a character's item quirks to trigger, the curse effect of a cursed item will also trigger.

General Cursed Items

Dancing Shoes (boots). Shiny red shoes with golden wings. *Always:* The shoes force you to dance whenever you hear music (even off-key whistling will work). The shoes magically re-appear on your feet if taken off for more than 10 minutes. *Recharge 6+:* You gain a +3 bonus to disengage checks until the end of the battle (or five minutes).

Deck of Many Cards (wondrous item). A divination deck. *Always:* The deck of cards continually grows, and you find your pockets and pouches filling with cards that spill out leaving a trail for anyone to follow. Occasionally, the cards spill out in a prophetic pattern that might have meaning to the owner or an ally.

Disappointment Hat (hat). Green conical hat. *Always:* Each time you cast a spell outside of combat or a spell is cast near you, it has some side effect (GM's choice) that inconveniences you. *Recharge 6+:* As a move action you pull out an item from the hat. Roll a d6 to see what you get: 1–2: You get a useless or disgusting item. 3–6: You pull a useful non-magical item that grants a +d6 bonus to your next skill check until the end of your next turn.

Girdle of Gender Switching (belt). Wide leather belt with acorn designs. *Always:* Increase your total recoveries by one, but your gender is switched. Removing the belt reverses the effect but it teleports back onto you if removed for more than 10 minutes. In addition, minor shifts in weight distribution throw your balance off, and you take a –1 penalty with melee attacks during your first battle each day.

Tome of Misfortune (implement). Book with an embossed face inside its cover. *1/day:* Regain one expended daily spell that you have cast. When you cast the recovered spell, roll a d6. 1–3: The book chooses the targets for the spell and can consider you and your allies as enemies, or your enemies as allies. 4–6: You choose targets normally.

Treasured Chest (wondrous item). It follows you on little feet, obeys you, and is much larger on the inside (able to hold the same amount of stuff as a large closet). *Always:* You can't move faster than the chest, and the chest is slow. You travel at half speed everywhere and can't use actions to move twice during a turn in battle.

Adventurer-tier Cursed Items

Acrobat's Stick (staff). A glowing rod that expands into a longer pole. *Always:* Bonus to attacks and damage: +2 (adventurer). In addition, if you are a rogue with the *swashbuckle* ability, you gain an extra use of that ability, but whenever you roll a natural 1 or 2 with any d20 roll, the staff flings you into danger (you take 2d6 damage and possibly provoke opportunity attacks in battle).

Anger Armor (heavy armor). Platemail or similar with leering faces on the pauldrons. *Always:* +2 AC (adventurer). In addition, when you miss with an attack and the escalation die is odd, roll a save; on a failure, you are enraged until the start of your next turn and take a –4 penalty to all defenses.

Backbiter Bow (bow). Gold bow with no string. It creates a glowing string and "energy arrows." *Always:* Bonus to attacks and damage: +2 (adventurer). In addition, when you miss with an attack and the escalation die is odd, roll a save; on a failure, you instead hit yourself with the attack.

Champion-tier Cursed Items

Bait Breastplate (any armor). Thick metal plate cuirass that attracts ranged attacks and spells even as it deflects melee attacks. *Always:* +3 AC (champion) against melee attacks, but –1 AC against ranged attacks.

Cudgel of Heedlessness (heavy two-handed melee weapon). A strangely glowing crude wooden club. *Always:* Bonus to attacks and damage: +3 (champion). In addition, when you roll a natural 1 with a melee attack using this weapon, you hit a random nearby ally with that attack and deal maximum damage. If you try to use a different weapon, the cudgel will teleport into your hand.

Ring of Delusion (ring). Ring made out of complex interlocking wooden pieces. *Always:* Whenever there are two possible explanations and one is obviously ridiculous, that is what you believe provided there is no obvious and direct proof that contradicts your delusion. In addition, you gain +3 bonus to checks to find traps and see through illusions.

Epic-tier Items

Chicken Shield (shield). A fancy cavalier's shield. *Always:* +35 hp (epic). In addition, when you miss with an attack and the escalation die is odd, roll a save; on a failure, you run away from that enemy as far as you can go (no disengage check, take opportunity attacks).

Danger Bracers (light armor). Chains welded into forearm armor. *Always:* +4 AC (epic). In addition, you can't disengage from enemies.

Procrastination Tome (implement). This book contains instructions for being a better spellcaster. *Always:* Bonus to spell attacks and damage: +5 (epic). In addition, during the first round of each battle you must spend all your actions either moving or "limbering up." This means not using any abilities, you're just jogging and stretching.

Names

Shadow dragons like to give themselves epithets and in writing give their names unnecessary diacritics: Darẅmak Darkhölder, Silvioús, Koñdialak the Doombringer, Tetkandÿl Duskbÿnder, Hażrōt, Räpraȟkal Lĭghtqůencher. The diacritics might be a code, or maybe the dragons just like the look of them.

Adventure Hooks

Bespoke Doom—A shadow dragon has seen that one day you will challenge it and decides to send shadow thieves to harass you while it crafts some cursed items just for you.

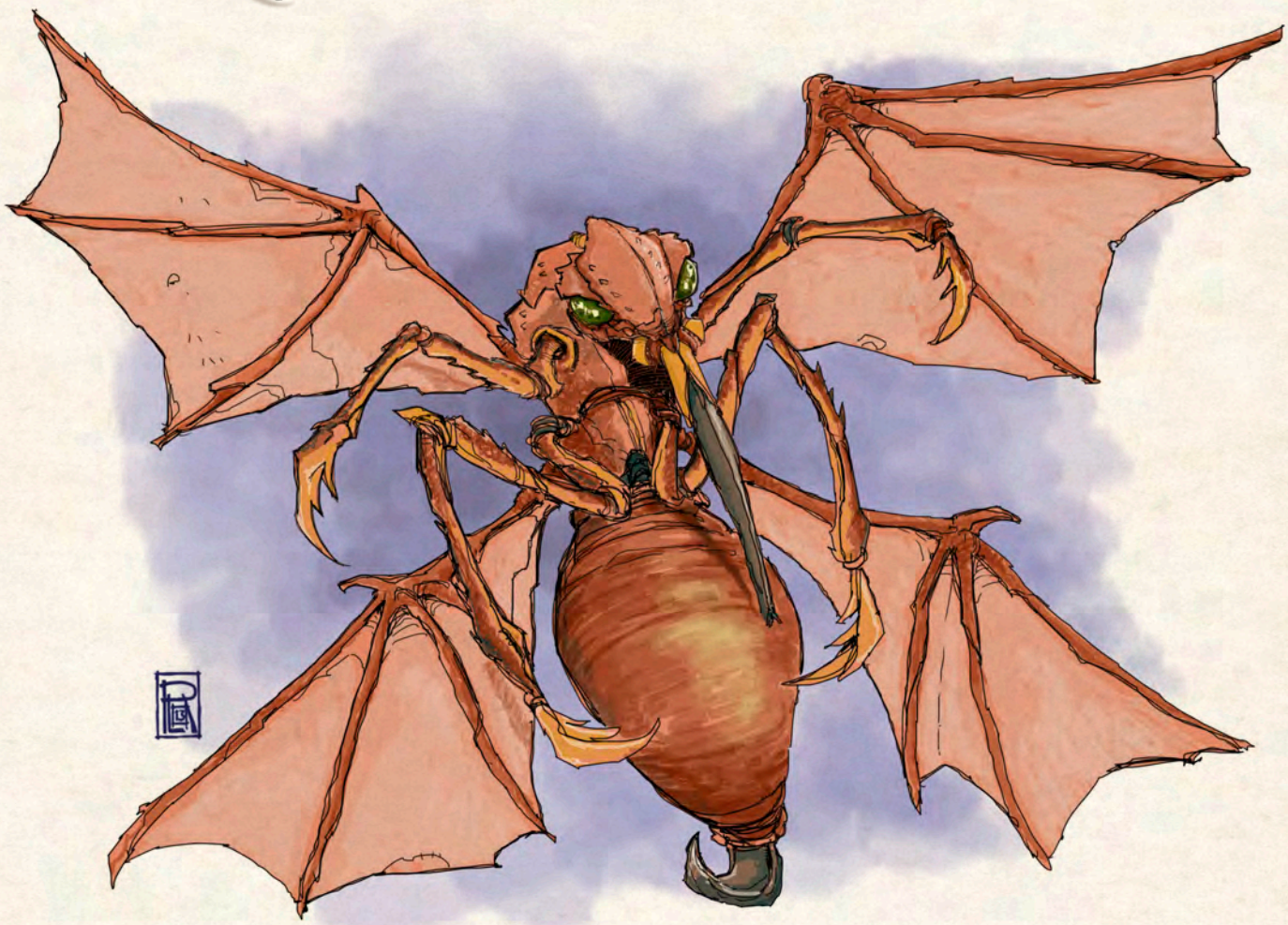
Curses Foiled—An enchantress hires you to kill a shadow dragon and bring her its heart so she can remove curses from dozens of clients.

It Seems Like a Simple Job—A wandering warrior has a cursed ring that causes any money she handles to turn into an equivalent value of chickens. Can you help her out, collecting debts and paying creditors on her behalf?

Ten Please—A shadow dragon is stocking dungeons as traps for adventurers that may one day challenge it. It would like you to fetch it ten live owlbears. It can pay.

Stirge

Giant insects that drain blood and use it to create more giant insects that drain blood.



Entomophobia Writ Large

Stirges are large insects roughly the size of a common housecat. Adult bodies are a foot in length, with a three-foot wingspan. They are commonly identified by their proboscis, the large hollow tube they use to sink into flesh and drain blood from victims. Their claws dig deep into their prey and don't let go without causing nasty, bleeding gashes. Stirge hives are common in the wild, but they can also be found in abandoned buildings, the upper levels of caverns, and anywhere else unwary adventurers make camp without looking up.

The most common member of a hive is the simply named stirge. It latches on to its prey and continues to drink until it's full. It carries the blood back to the hive, feeding stirgelings that live inside the walls of the nest until they grow to full size. The archer stirge is deployed in defense of the hive, though it often accompanies stirges foraging in the wild. The cobbler stirge builds the stirges' hives and secretes the sweet resin that holds the hives' victims in place. All stirges are capable of producing eggs, which are laid in the desiccated corpses of humanoids and beasts that have been completely drained of blood in the nest.

Stirges' origins are mysterious. Any of the following possibilities could be true:

- Stirges are a more or less natural consequence of insect progression in a world full of magic.
- With all the magic surging through the world, simple mosquitos were mutated by drinking the blood of fantastic creatures. *Healing* potions are like anabolic steroids to insects. Hives often form around old campsites full of discarded potion bottles or alchemical sites where the seals have rotted away.
- The meddling of an icon with natural life forms. The Archmage might have used bugs as test subjects for potions and a few got out to the wild. The Elf Queen might have wanted some "beautiful" and dangerous pets and released or forgot about them when she got bored. Someone zealously devoted to the High Druid might have created stirges to keep interlopers out of sacred areas. Stirges could have evolved outside hellholes without the Diabolist even noticing.
- Somewhere, in a giant hive burrowed deep within a colony of hives, there is a giant Queen Stirge in the Hive of Hives. The consumption of blood sustains the colonies, but the Queen Stirge feeds on something more—the souls of those killed by her lovely subjects. Like the victims of the colony hives who

remain trapped until eaten alive, the souls stuck in the Hive of Hives remain until consumed by the Queen. Which means brave adventurers can bring the soul back.

Stirge

Known by its deep red coloring along the claws, the common stirge does most of the hive's dirty work. It drains the blood of its victims with a hollow proboscis designed for exactly that job.

0 level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +4

Claws +7 vs. AC—2 damage, and the stirge can make a *draining probe* attack against the target during its next turn if it's still engaged with the target

[Special trigger] **Draining probe +7 vs. AC (one enemy hit by *claws* last turn)**—5 damage, and 5 ongoing damage

Flight: Stirges fly well. Also, the pitch of their wings is high and thin, allowing a stirge to get very close without tipping off its prey.

Nastier Specials

One and done: After hitting a living creature that has blood with its *draining probe* attack, the stirge heals 5 hit points and will use its next turn to move, fleeing to the hive to feed the stirgelings . . . and to alert the hive that there is an easy meal nearby. A new full-strength stirge enters the battle during the next round on the same initiative count.

AC	**16**	
PD	14	**HP 18**
MD	10	

Archer Stirge

The proboscis of this bright-striped stirge looks like a quiver of arrows. The barbed stingers shoot out at range, and the serrated claws cause nasty wounds.

1st level archer [BEAST]
Initiative: +6

Serrated claws +7 vs. AC—4 damage

R: Barbed stinger +9 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)—3 damage, and 3 ongoing damage
Natural 16+: One stirge ally engaged with the target can make a melee attack against it as a free action.

Flight: The archer stirge flies faster and higher than a normal stirge, but on louder wings.

AC	**18**	
PD	14	**HP 22**
MD	12	

Cobbler Stirge

Rather than drain fluids, the cobbler stirge secretes them in the construction of the hive. When forced to defend its creation, it can spray the disgusting stuff upon a foe.

1st level blocker [BEAST]
Initiative: +5

Claws +7 vs. AC—6 damage

C: Gooey bloody spray +7 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)—5 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The target is stuck (save ends).
Natural odd hit or miss: The cobbler stirge takes 3 damage.

Painful flight: The cobbler has stubby ill-proportioned wings and takes 1d6 damage at the end of each round that it flies during battle.

AC	**16**	
PD	14	**HP 30**
MD	12	

Stirgelings

These tiny stirges pour forth from the walls of a hive damaged in battle or when the taste of fresh blood is brought to them from nearby victims. They make due with clawing at flesh to get at the sweet, sweet blood inside that will help them someday grow up to be strong.

0 level mook [BEAST]
Initiative: +2

Claws +5 vs. AC—The effect depends on the roll
Natural odd hit: 2 damage.
Natural even hit: Choose one effect, and then the stirgeling mob takes 4 damage (killing this creature first).
Regular stirgeling: The target takes 3 damage, and 3 ongoing damage.
Archer stirgeling: The target takes 6 damage.
Cobbler stirgeling: The target takes 3 damage and is stuck until end of its next turn.

Flight: They aren't strong fliers but they are quick and agile.

AC	**15**	
PD	13	**HP 4 (mook)**
MD	9	

Mook: Kill one stirgeling mook for every 4 damage you deal to the mob.

"The archer's stingers burn like the Diabolist's kiss when you pull them out. The extra blood loss pairs well with a pilsner. One for each barb and you'll pass out for eight hours easy."
—Bernie Barrelsmasher, dwarf fighter

Nastier Specials

With the blood drinking that stirges are known for, almost all of their attacks could have ongoing damage (or increased ongoing damage) to represent either the blood drinking or the nasty, bleeding gashes the creatures leave behind when interrupted.

Building Battles

Stirges are generally only concerned with maintaining the reproductive life-cycle through obtaining blood and feeding it to their young. But other creatures will often keep stirges as pets or guardians. Kobolds like to use cobblers for their secretions. Many of those who attend the Queen's court see them as pretty pets, provided you have magic or the proper perfume protecting you from them. Centaurs always know where stirge nests are in the lands where they live or travel through, for use as distractions against enemies during battle. There are stories that the dwarves will sometime use stirges to clear out goblin caverns that they want access to for mining.

Stirges and the Icons

Archmage: The Archmage abhors blood magic, but he understands the value of keeping a blood sample on hand for the purposes of sympathetic magic. For those who run afoul of his bureaucracy, a common punishment is being forced to give up a drink of blood to a stirge. The stirge is then turned to stone to preserve it and the blood. If the offender repeats their crime, the blood sample/stirge is given to the offended party to do with as they see fit. The amount of blood preserved inside the stirge is enough for one spell or ritual to be cast against the offender.

Dwarf King: Stirges often set up hives near entrances to the underground warrens that lead to Forge. They harass the merchants and caravans carrying necessary supplies to the icon's kingdom. The Dwarf King has put a standing bounty on stirge corpses, payable at any frontier fort and in settlements such as Anvil. Stirge corpses are considered gauche in the capital of Forge, but in other dwarven settlements the corpses sometimes function as an established trading commodity called the blood-meal, in which a stirge corpse can be traded for a meal at any restaurant in the city. Stirge stew contains a hearty mix of vegetables and is available from most cooks who cater to dwarves. It also travels well, and the scent of it cooking keeps the creatures away for a few hours.

Elf Queen: In a campaign with a badass Elf Queen, stirges, with their deadly nature and bright colorization, offer exotic pets for the Queen's subjects. It's one of the few things the Shards agree upon. High elves carefully craft hive rooms in their castles for stirges to roost in; the elves are protected by spells while in the chamber and the cocoons are pleasing to the eyes. Wood elves use the proboscis for medical purposes and natural spell components. Dark elves admire the stirge's blood-draining capabilities and often maintain a small hive to watch stirges feed. Discussing the creature is often one of the few safe topics that can be broached with a complete stranger in the Court.

High Druid: Wild stirge hives are often found in the unblemished wilds the High Druid prefers. Those who wish to confer directly with the High Druid can risk making their way into a hive. If they can do so without harming any of the creatures, they gain an audience of sorts. She will answer up to three questions (providing information as she sees fit), her voice conducted through the buzz of the stirges' wings. Interested adventurers can use stealth, magic, or natural knowledge to get to the center of the hive, but if even one stirgeling is crushed or killed, the summons won't be answered (and the stirges will decide they're hungry).

Lich King: The Lich King often maintains stirge hives when he has vampire troops stationed in an area. The stirges keep victims alive for the troops to feed on at the barracks when other food options are scarce. Vampires in the field might use stirges as hunting animals. While stirges can't be trained, they can harass victims until the vampires arrive on the scene and clean up. In very desperate situations, vampires will slake their hunger upon blood-filled stirges. The Lich King has been known to set stirges free in lands he plans to loose vampires upon.

Stirge Terrain Effects: Inside a Hive

The victims of stirge attacks are often carried back to a hive to be cocooned. The resin cobbler stirges' secretions preserve a creature cocooned inside the walls. The cocoon forces nutrients into exposed skin and keeps the creature alive for a short time. The trapped creature then produces a steady supply of blood that feeds the stirgelings inside the hive's walls, until it's drained to death. Those creatures that can't be brought back to the hive by the stirges are drained completely, with most of the blood deposited directly into the hive walls.

Fighting inside a hive chamber constructed from cobbler cocoons presents a variety of challenges. When a non-stirge creature rolls an attack or skill check and gets a natural roll less than the escalation die during a battle inside a hive, roll a d6 to see what effect occurs.

1: **Slippery and sweet:** The creature makes a misstep and slips to the floor. The creature chooses one: it's stuck until the end of its next turn due to bad footing; OR it takes 1d6 damage (per tier) from falling on something sharp.

2: **Face full of goop:** A large drip of blood/secretion from the hive wall splats right into the creature's eyes, blinding it. Treat a blind creature as weakened (save ends) until the goop naturally washes away from sweat and motion. A creature can spend a standard action to wipe the goop out of its eyes and end the effect.

3: **Wedged:** The gooey walls envelop a limb, trapping it. A trapped creature must make a Strength check against a normal DC for the tier of the hive to escape.

4: **Melted:** The sustained heat of torches, fire-based weapons, body heat, and/or magic effects turns the hive walls into a drippy mess. Each non-stirge creature in the area takes a penalty to skill checks equal to the escalation die (or –2 out of battle).

5–6. Breaking the seal: The walls contain dozens of stirgelings just aching to snack on fresh blood. A hive wall is ruptured and two stirgelings crawl through the hole in the wall and attack. Roll initiative for them; they enter the battle on that initiative count during the next round. Add each new set of two that escape this way to this mob.

Trapped in a Stirge Hive

Stirges cocoon their living victims up in the rafters. The cocooning process is slow. The cobbler spews its concoction over the body, and the goop hardens quickly in the air. If the subject is still conscious, they have a chance to escape. But they must fight off the majority of the stirges currently in the hive, starting with the cobbler in charge of entombing them. Cobblers sense if a victim is still alive through body heat and still pulsing blood. If a trapped creature can cool itself down/slow its heartbeat somehow, it might be able to fool the stirges and sneak away once their attention is elsewhere.

The "merchant's drizzle" is a term adventurers use to describe the sound of coins dropping from the pockets of creatures trapped in a stirge hive. Most valuables end up on the floor. The stirges care only about the blood they bring back to the hive. Digging around in the drippings of a stirge hive is a good way to score some extra gold. Just be sure all the stirges in the hive are dead. Some unconfirmed reports suggests the stirges have greater intelligence or cunning than suspected—the stirges plant valuable items like magic weapons and jewelry in plain sight within a hive chamber that allows the stirges to use their best swarm tactics upon intruders.

Hives are often set up in cave systems. The creatures use the cave for shelter and cocooning but build their own tunnels within the larger cave. If a stirge hive exists in a cave and has not blocked off tunnels deeper into the cave, it's usually a sign that there is nothing worth exploring that direction. A blocked entryway, or one that was blocked, usually means other creatures live inside the cave system. In the rare case of an urban stirge hive, the stirges usually lair in public works tunnels like sewers. Forest hives occur as well, but they are usually small, broken-up nests within an area, unless the trees are close together and have very dense branches.

> *"Letting loose a stirge hive in a city is an easy way to spook folks into thinking a vampire is after them. Then if you or your mates come in and set up a fake vampire hunt, the mark will be forever grateful you saved their poor, innocent soul."*
>
> *—Maria Dozenfingers, halfling rogue*

Names

Stirges don't have a language of their own. Other races, however, have given them plenty of colorful names, including: gutsuckers (halfling), spearnoses (gnomish), and buzzkillers (dwarvish). The name stirge comes from an old elvish legend about a blood witch who sent her minions to collect the blood of villagers so she could put it into a cauldron for a spell to bewitch them all.

Adventure Hooks

Badder Bugs—Someone is crossbreeding stirges with each other. A stirge featuring the worst parts of the stirge, archer, and cobbler would wreak havoc on towns and undefended caravans.

High Anxiety—A noble's child is taken by stirges. He is cocooned in a hive built high in the treetops. Getting up to the hive will be hard enough; making sure the child doesn't fall to the forest floor below while battling stirges will be even harder.

Medicinal Purposes—Someone important to the characters is stricken with a rare disease. The only drug that treats the disease requires the distillation of cobbler stirge cocoon during the brewing process.

The Blood Bank Job—The adventurers need to get a sample of someone's blood kept in one of the Archmage's vaults. Not only that, they must figure out how to reverse the petrification process used on the stirge that has the blood inside it.

> *"We lose more of our number to disease than battle. These things are unclean. They bring war to our women and children. For this, they must be cleansed with fire."*
>
> *—Zirtsamat, half-orc barbarian*

Tarrasque

A mountain walked or stumbled. Then it grew claws and attacked.

A Unique Threat

The tarrasque is the biggest and toughest thing in the world that wants you dead.* Its 600-ton body rests on four vast paws sporting razor-sharp talons, each over 12 feet across. Spikes jut from the plates of its carapace, covering a back that is 50 yards wide. Its head towers hundreds of feet overhead, bedecked with horns and tusks around ebony eyes and a cruel reptilian snout. A spiked tail stretches behind it, smashing castle walls or uprooting trees with every flick.

The tarrasque would fill the Imperial Arena in Axis to bursting with its bulk. (At least one emperor has been deposed for suggesting he'd like to see such a thing.) It's a being of pure appetite harnessed to overwhelming power that brings destruction, despoliation, and death wherever it goes. Unlike the Koru behemoths, it doesn't have a predictable migration path and travels wherever its gluttony of the moment leads it.

The only thing that has allowed civilization, and buildings in particular, to progress with the tarrasque in the world is that the creature falls into hibernation at unpredictable intervals. It slides to the bottom of a deep lake or sea, or crawls into the underworld, and slumbers for years or decades. Until it awakens . . . ravenously hungry.

*A homicidal Koru behemoth would be a lot bigger and a lot tougher. Fortunately for everyone, Koru behemoths aren't homicidal.

A Tarrasque to Fight

We're presenting a tarrasque that an epic-tier party could conceivably fight, though it's no accident that it falls outside the scope of our building battles guidelines. If that's not your picture of the beast and you want it to be unbeatable, you shouldn't have to dial the numbers up very far. In that case, encounters with the tarrasque need to have goals other than defeating the creature.

Tarrasque

Huge 15th level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +20

Creature of Legend
The tarrasque can make one close attack and one melee attack each round as a standard action. Note that flying is usually no defense against the tarrasque, which is huge and powerful enough to pluck or whack enemies out of the sky with surprising leaps.

All-enveloping toothy maw +19 vs. AC—155 damage
Natural even hit: The tarrasque grabs the target. It will swallow a grabbed enemy in 1d3 rounds (see *swallow whole*).
Natural 16+: The tarrasque swallows the target immediately (see *swallow whole*).

Immense spike, horn, or tusk +18 vs. AC—155 damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 9d6 extra damage and pops free from the tarrasque as it's hurled far away.

C: Earth-shaking, taloned claw +20 vs. AC (each nearby enemy in a group)—155 damage
Natural 16+: The target is stunned (save ends).
Miss: The target is dazed (save ends).

C: Cataclysmic tail slam +18 vs. PD (each nearby enemy in a group)—170 damage
Natural 16+: The target is vulnerable (save ends).
Miss: The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Amphibious: The tarrasque can swim and breathe underwater (or it holds so much air in its vast lungs that it makes no difference).

Enormously bulky: The tarrasque is so huge that it ignores opportunity attacks. In addition, normal-sized enemies are like fleas to it, and disengaging from the tarrasque requires only an easy save (6+), unless the target is grabbed.

Immortal: The tarrasque can't be killed, save by the explicit will of a god (and not some jumped-up local god, either) or, perhaps, the sacrifice of a great icon. The tarrasque's HP total indicates the amount of damage required to make it disgorge swallowed enemies and flee to go hibernate while it regenerates the damage it suffered and decide if it wants to rampage again.

Inflexible: The tarrasque can't easily fight foes that get onto its back, and may not even notice them if they aren't attacking it. When it does tire of a passenger, it can either use its *tail slam* attack (–2 attack penalty: on a hit, the target only takes half damage and is knocked off the tarrasque [possibly falling damage]; on a miss, the target takes no damage) or a *drag* attack as a standard action, crushing the rider between its scales and a mountainside or other high, hard obstacle.
Drag +21 vs. PD (each creature on its back)—130 damage, the target pops free of the tarrasque, and the target is hampered (save ends)

Legendary resistance: The tarrasque is immune to normal conditions and effects (stunned, weakened, etc.), but it isn't completely impervious. Bypassing its resistances requires icon-supported effort. A PC can use one 5 or 6 they acquired from icon relationship dice rolls to overcome the resistance each time they use an attack or power that would apply a condition or effect upon the tarrasque. Of course, they must also provide a story to go along with the reason the tarrasque is affected.

Leveler: When the escalation die is even, as a move action the tarrasque can demolish any ordinary structure it can reach, such as a house, castle wall, temple, or ship. The beast automatically reduces the structure to rubble, rendering it useless. Each creature on top of or within the structure is subject to a *collapse* attack.
Collapse +18 vs. PD (each creature in/on the structure)—90 damage, and the target is stuck and takes 20 ongoing damage (hard save ends both, 16+)

Swallow whole: Once a creature is swallowed, it goes inside one of the tarrasque's gigantic stomachs. It can still act while inside the tarrasque, but it will have to deal with the beast's stomach acid that is splashing around. A swallowed creature must deal 400 damage to the tarrasque to force it to disgorge the contents of its gullet, freeing the creature. During the tarrasque's turn, it can make a *gullet digestion* attack against the target as a free action.
Gullet digestion +19 vs. PD—80 acid damage, and 20 ongoing acid damage
Miss: 5d12 acid damage.

Soft-ish innerbelly: The tarrasque doesn't have scales on the inside. It takes a –5 penalty to all defenses against attacks from inside its gullet, though only melee and close attacks can be made in there. The tarrasque's insides are immune to acid damage, however.

Nastier Specials

Fear: While engaged with the tarrasque, enemies that have 216 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

Regeneration 230: While a tarrasque is damaged, its malign magical flesh heals 230 hit points at the start of the tarrasque's turn. It can regenerate five times per battle. If it heals up to its maximum hit points, then that use of *regeneration* doesn't count against the five-use limit. With this power, the monstrosity is likely unstoppable without a powerful magical artifact designed specifically to bind, wound, or otherwise hamper the tarrasque. Finding such a legendary item may be a quest in itself, made more urgent as the tarrasque devastates the heroes' homeland.

AC	**31**	
PD	29	**HP 2130**
MD	25	

Building Battles

A battle against a tarrasque is likely to be horrifyingly dangerous, even in the most epic of epic-tier games. The monster can't easily defeat a hero who doesn't stick around, however. (Although its immense legs eat up territory, the tarrasque won't try to outrun a fleet-footed elf or galloping horse.) Even on the battlefield, it doesn't fight with any particular strategy besides "you go squish now."

A tarrasque battle can also involve lower-level challenges. The tarrasque may have several colonies of stirges or larger flying insects nesting in the crevices of its hide, eating parasites, dead skin, and any leftover victims. The PCs would have to battle those creatures to reach some goal, while doing their best not to cause harm to the tarrasque and attract its attention. This danger could be represented, for example, by having each PC roll a save each turn. On a failure, they take falling/shaking damage.

Orcs, gnolls, or other predatory monsters often follow in the tarrasque's path, attacking survivors, looting ruins, and dry-gulching adventuring parties weakened by battling the vast beast.

The Tarrasque and the Icons

Legend says the tarrasque can only be tamed by the true power of the Age. Various icons therefore claim some connection to the tarrasque, although they're likely to remember sudden, urgent errands elsewhere if their claims are put to the test.

Archmage: When the subject is the impressive power and might of the tarrasque, the Archmage hints at his role in its creation. When the subject is liability for its rampages, he blames the Diabolist.

Elf Queen: Every so often, the Elf Queen requests her most importunate lovers bring her the ear of the tarrasque for her bower.

Emperor: An Imperial scout squadron is officially detailed to track the tarrasque in its rampages and offer succor where possible. Like many official Imperial details, the post of Warden de Tarrasque tends to become a sinecure, with the actual work farmed out to lower-born local rangers.

Orc Lord: The tarrasque might just be the ally the Orc Lord needs to deal with enemies that are proof against his hordes. The Orc Lord is aware of the ironies involved in any sentence that includes his name and the word ally, much less the word tarrasque.

The Three: The various chromatic dragons of the world, speaking generally, eat themselves up inside with jealousy of the tarrasque. How dare it be bigger? More indestructible *and* more destructive? More unique? It's not even *sapient!* While the beast hibernates, they can pretend ambivalence, but the Three seek every scrap of information about the tarrasque's few weaknesses. Depending on your campaign history, members of the Three might have had scraps with the tarrasque at various points in the world's history.

Names

The tarrasque is unique; its name is "the Tarrasque."

Adventure Hooks

Unless they are epically deaf to local concerns, or are traveling through utter wasteland, the heroes have plenty of warning before they meet the tarrasque. Refugees, beggars, and badly stomped would-be defenders carry tales of its rampages, make dazed guesses about its course and speed, and fling their arms illustratively wide while doing both.

Once encountered, the tarrasque may be standing majestically, devouring a forest, or (more likely) stomping picturesque locals (and localities) under foot. Fighting a tarrasque without a bunch of scenery to knock down and inconvenient innocents to endanger is like fighting Godzilla in the desert instead of Tokyo: plausible, but boring.

The Brotherhood of the Beast—A tarrasque-worshiping cult commits blasphemies and utters slanders against all the icons. Worse, its magical emanations ape the tarrasque's mindless destructions, blasting apart fortresses and hovels alike. The cultists make pilgrimage to lands where the tarrasque is expected (by prophecy or by scouting report) and sow chaos in advance of their bestial lord's coming. If the tarrasque is asleep, their rituals attempt to awaken it.

The Path of Destruction—Something your icon (or their highly placed deputy) really, really values is in a building in the most recently reported path of the tarrasque. Higher-level heroes with noble icons may need to divert the tarrasque to save a magical garden, ailing elven princess, or other hard-to-move, fragile target. Lower-level heroes with more dubious icons may be sent to loot a palace of its normally better-defended treasures or break a comrade out of prison during the tarrasque's convenient rampage.

The Sleep of Monsters is Reason Enough—Someone has found the lake where the tarrasque now sleeps. To prevent the Brotherhood of the Beast, or a misguided devotee of the Diabolist, or anyone else really from attempting a ritual to reawaken the thing, the Crusader has ordered that everyone who knows the lake's secret be killed. The Crusader may provide a magical scroll that lists target names, send the PCs out on a single trajectory ("Antheus Graveling found it. Find out who he's talked to."), or require that every living tongue within ten days' journey of the lake be cut out.

The Saved

Only freakishly lucky hellhole victims ever get rescued. But you'd have to be unlucky to be trapped in a hellhole in the first place, so maybe it's not a surprise that so many trapped souls with no reason to hope for succor end up getting "saved" by the armies of the Crusader.

Being Saved Isn't as Good as It Sounds

Early in his campaigns, the Crusader realized that the demon-wracked mortal survivors and trapped souls he was freeing from conquered hellholes could be harnessed as part of his war machine. The Saved, as he chooses to refer to them, are a hobbling miscellany of torture-wracked humanoids who wear magical "armor" that does more to conceal and sustain their flayed bodies than it does to protect them in combat.

Protecting the Saved is not the point. When the Saved lose what remains of their lives while fighting for the Crusader, he promises that they will go on to quiet death, or to whatever afterlife reward they thought they deserved. Or to a hell of his choosing if he thinks they deserve nothing better, though that last sentiment probably isn't well-known.

The endless tortures and fear inflicted in hellholes takes a huge toll on mortals. But the Crusader has found a way to twist the pain into a type of power, turning some of these victims into warriors that serve him in hellholes, in temples and garrisons outside the hellholes, and sometimes even on suicide missions commanded or arranged by more reliable agents.

The Saved are a bit of an embarrassment in the more urbane sections of the Empire. But as the Crusader's people enjoy pointing out, the other icons' followers may be most uncomfortable about the status of the Saved because it's a strong reminder that the Crusader is doing more about solving the hellhole problem than any of the so-called heroic icons.

Avenging Orb

The magical aptitude this person had in their original life has been funneled into a fist-sized onyx ball that never leaves their armored hands.

2nd level caster [humanoid]
Initiative: +3

Gauntlet slap +5 vs. AC—3 damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: The target also takes 3 ongoing psychic damage.

R: Orb of pain +7 vs. MD (one or more nearby or far away enemies; see *history of abuse*)—5 psychic damage
Natural 5, 10, 15, 20: The target also takes 3 ongoing psychic damage.

Beyond saving: The avenging orb takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

History of abuse: Keep track of the number of enemy attacks that hit the avenging orb during the battle. Until the end of the battle, the avenging orb can target an additional enemy beyond the first with its *orb of pain* attack for each of those hits. (Note that avenging orbs engaged in melee usually choose to use *orb of pain* and suffer any resulting opportunity attacks; if they're lucky they'll survive the attack and be able to choose more targets for the *orb of pain*.)

AC	**17**	
PD	13	**HP 46**
MD	13	

Destroying Sword

Snuffling sounds come from inside the helm of the armored creature as it realizes you're not a demon, but you'll do.

2nd level wrecker [humanoid]
Initiative: +4

Cheap greatsword +8 vs. AC—3 damage
Natural odd hit: The target takes extra damage equal to half the amount the destroying sword took from the last attack that hit it this battle.

R: Shortbow +6 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—6 damage

Beyond saving: The destroying sword takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

AC	**16**	
PD	14	**HP 38**
MD	13	

Enduring Shield

"Die in gratitude, live in our memory," says the priest of the Crusader as she blesses a new enduring shield in the ceremony of retrieval.

2nd level blocker [humanoid]
Initiative: +3

Steel hammer +7 vs. AC—6 damage
Miss: 1d4 damage.

Anguished interceptor: When an enduring shield is engaged and an enemy attempts to move past it, the enduring shield can roll a disengage check to intercept it as an interrupt action (once per round). If the attempt fails, the enduring shield takes 1d6 psychic damage.

Beyond saving: The enduring shield takes a –5 penalty to saving throws.

Supernatural endurance: When an attack hits the enduring shield, it gains a +5 bonus to the defense that the attack targeted until the end of the battle or until another attack hits it, in which case the bonus switches to the defense most recently hit.

AC	**18**	
PD	15	**HP 40**
MD	13	

Building Battles

The Saved will work with anyone the Crusader tells them to. In practice, it's bad form to let them get far from the oversight of senior commanders. The Saved are often pathetically eager for "normal" social interactions and may talk more about current operations than suits the Crusader's sense of proper military security. Social pathos doesn't carry over into combat situations—the Saved recognize that their final salvation depends on efficiently carrying out their commanders' orders.

The Saved require the GM to do more tracking than in most battles. If you use all three Saved you'll end up tracking the number of hits for the avenging orbs, the size of the hit for the destroying swords, and which defense was hit for each enduring shield. If you're concerned about that style of record-keeping, use simple monsters alongside the Saved to keep it easy.

The Saved make an interesting challenge for 1st or 2nd level characters created by experienced players. Experienced players who have already gotten the rhythm of *13th Age* combat can be surprised by the new questions posed by the Saved's methods of profiting from enemy attacks.

DIY Advice

We designed the Saved as low-level monsters for two reasons. First, from a story perspective, we couldn't see them having a great deal of traction in the world of the living. They've been abused horribly and there are just enough of their bodies and spirits left to stand in as cannon-fodder. From a mechanical perspective, the *supernatural endurance*, *history of abuse*, and *cheap greatsword* (trigger) abilities are extremely delicate mechanics, the type of thing that can become a campaign killer if it's used recklessly. Something like the *beyond saving* mechanic (the –5 penalty to saves) is necessary for monsters like this, because they need a foil that can be exploited when normal fighting proves incredibly risky.

If you find that you like these mechanics and want to use something like the Saved later in the campaign when the PCs are in champion tier or epic tier, consider a plotline in which the Crusader begins using the magic that creates the Saved as a sort of punishment for disobedient followers, creating higher-level versions of the Saved with a bit more staying power.

For even stranger higher-level versions, try splicing demon mechanics together with one of the mechanics from the Saved, showing how a conquered demon could attempt to find redemption in the Crusader's eyes by dying for the cause.

Saving the Saved

It's entirely possible that the scarred and tortured form within a suit of Saved armor might belong to someone whose pre-hellhole life is of interest to the PCs or the PCs' friends. Most of the Saved seem to have only scattered memories of their original existence, but our guess is that rituals of restoration with the support of an icon might succeed in bringing back memories or even more. Certainly that opens avenues for interesting stories and territorial conflicts with the Crusader.

Names

The Saved don't use names because the Crusader's forces don't like it (they're cannon-fodder after all). Some have identifying numbers and colors painted on their armor. Blue 3 understands that there was another Blue 3 the month before and there will likely be another the month after.

The Saved & the Icons

Great Gold Wyrm: Rescuing souls and then forcing them to commit more evil acts is precisely the type of broken logic that makes the Crusader one of the enemies despite his efforts to face down demons. It's not unheard of for exceptionally charismatic paladins of the Wyrm to turn exceptional members of the Saved away from the service of the Crusader onto the path of fighting demons on the golden way. By their nature the Saved don't last long, and it's far more likely that they need to be given a swift and merciful death to avoid staining their souls any further.

Priestess: The Priestess acknowledges that the Crusader's efforts against the Diabolist have been more fruitful than expected. As strange fruits of the crusade, the Saved obviously need to be told that the Crusader's path is unlikely to end well and that they can choose to serve other masters. But the Priestess' people aren't foolish enough to imagine that the message is likely to be heard often.

Prince of Shadows: Ah, the places you can go when you've scarred yourself up and inserted yourself into a foul suit of containment armor that disguises your features completely. The things you can hear too.

Adventure Hooks

Damnable Pilgrims—A boat full of the Saved, with no apparent Crusader-overlords, is sailing toward the Demon Coast, carrying regalia of the Great Gold Wyrm and claiming that they intend to sail downriver toward the Golden Citadel. This has to be a plot. But whose?

Deserters from the Crusade—One or more members of the Saved are on the run, saying that they need to return to their original homes on the other side of the Empire in order to save family members who are threatened by the same type of demons who originally captured them. Who are the PCs going to help? Self-willed members of the Crusader's forces that are searching for the escapees, or the escapees themselves?

Saved by the Dungeon?—There is no earthly reason that creatures who are apparently Saved should be the main inhabitants of a living dungeon. In other words, it's exactly the type of violation of sense that living dungeons specialize in.

Warbanner

Warbanners are the murderous creations of a magical arms race from an earlier age. They are ongoing proof that the wrong tools can turn the brightest warriors into death-puppets.

Let Your Battle Flag Fly

Warbanners are sentient magical constructs that communicate via short-range telepathy. A warbanner looks like a great battle flag, but the banner pole that appears to connect it to the warrior bearing it is illusory. A warbanner flies under its own power but prefers to maintain a connection with a warrior fighting beneath it, referred to in the following rules as its "bearer."

Whatever their original purpose, warbanners turned out to be terrible weapons, even for the forces who fought with them. They assume command of any unit they are attached to via compulsion. They may fly the colors of a duke, general, warlord, or even an icon, but in truth, once they are on the field of battle, they serve no one, only following their own compulsion for slaughter.

Warriors that agree to serve under a warbanner, or who are forced to, quickly lose their individual personalities and become cogs in the warbanner's machine. Most of the warriors under the sway of a warbanner are mooks, but some warbanners have a mix of mook and non-mook allies. The troops fighting under a warbanner are always humanoids and usually melee fighters.

No one understands why some warbanners remain dormant for years, imitating lifeless flags or hiding deep in crypts or dungeons, while others are on a near constant rampage.

An NPC Problem

Warbanner magic quickly takes control of lesser warriors, but anyone with an icon relationship, like all PCs and many important NPCs, can shake off the compulsion easily. For characters who have connections with the icons, the warbanner compulsion registers as just another magical item quirk, and not one that can be encouraged.

Standard Warbanner Abilities

Warbanners have a number of abilities in common. The feral warbanner has the full version of these abilities. The later icon-associated warbanners refer to these abilities in shorter form.

The warbanner has a few more abilities than we ordinarily recommend giving to monsters. We justify the complexity load by advising GMs that a warbanner generally commands large groups of mooks that are simple to play.

Creatures in a warbanner's band are allies fully under its control. It could also have allies not in its band.

Feral Warbanner

Feral warbanners fly over whatever hapless band of warriors they've most recently "impressed."

Double-strength 2nd level caster [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +7

Whipping barbed tassel +7 vs. AC—10 damage
Miss: 5 damage.

C: Banner magic—Roll 2d20 and use each roll (or a lower result of your choice) to determine one effect

1–5: The warbanner's bearer can make a basic attack with a +2 attack bonus as a free action.

6–10: Each different enemy engaged with a creature in the warbanner's band takes 1d6 psychic damage.

11–15: If any mooks in the warbanner's band have dropped this battle, return one of those mooks to the battle next to the warbanner. (If the warbanner has no mooks in its band, choose a lower result.)

16–20: The warbanner can make a *false rally* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: False rally +7 vs. MD (one nearby enemy with 12 hp or fewer)**—The target is confused (hard save ends, 16+)
Critical hit: The target can now only save against the confusion with a natural 20 (or until the warbanner drops) and can't flee if the rest of the PCs choose to do so.

Designated bearer: Once per round as a quick action, the warbanner can fly directly above a lower-level ally in its band and designate that ally as its bearer. Alternately, it can release itself from a bearer and fly free.

Bearer beware: While the warbanner has a bearer it moves with the bearer and is engaged by enemies that engage the bearer. The bearer is vulnerable to all attacks but it can use the escalation die.

Conditional resist damage 16+: Unless an ally in the warbanner's band dropped to 0 hp since the start of the current round, an enemy attacking the warbanner must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only takes half damage. This ability has no effect if the warbanner has no allies in its band.

Flight: Warbanners fly quickly, fluttering in winds only they can feel, preferably never touching the ground. They can't fly off the ground higher than a flag on a pole can be carried into battle, so enemies on the ground can still target them. At best, a warbanner might gain a +2 bonus to defenses against attacks made by small PCs like halflings and gnomes.

Mook morale: Mooks fighting in the warbanner's band gain a bonus to their hit points equal to the warbanner's level (2).

AC	**18**	
PD	14	**HP 70**
MD	14	

Building Battles

The most likely encounters with feral warbanners have them leading 1st level mooks like goblin scum or kobold archers, or 2nd level mooks like the human rabble whose stats appear in the sidebar. Use this style of warbanner + mooks arrangement for battles against the warbanners associated with icons.

As a rough rule of thumb, use one warbanner and multiply the PCs' level by the number of PCs to determine the number of mooks in a band (assuming the mooks are the same level as the PCs).

Warbanners and the Icons

Most of the icons now know that using warbanners in their armies always hurts them in the end. This knowledge was hard-earned, so there are warbanners devoted to most of the icons scattered throughout the world.

Of course, there are also individual commanders too arrogant or desperate to believe that the lessons of history apply to them. Such commanders might deliberately perform the rituals to summon a warbanner that is more-or-less devoted to their cause, particularly if they were already facing certain death.

Specific story ideas and icon connections appear in the following entries. For now we'll just mention the icons who are most likely to encourage the use of warbanners or who would never allow a banner devoted to them.

Great Gold Wyrm: Unlike the forces of the Emperor, the paladins of the Great Gold Wyrm never looked to a sentient banner to lead them into battle.

High Druid: It's hard to say whether followers of the High Druid think that warbanners are truly abominations or if they merely find them hideously distasteful.

Priestess: It's hard to think of an approach to problem-solving that is further from the Priestess' preferred methods. Since she is new to the world in this age there aren't even Priestess warbanners left over from earlier mistakes.

Prince of Shadows: The idea of a warbanner devoted to the Prince of Shadows is such a perverse notion that his followers insist that "it can't be done," but then they smile and ask how much you'd be willing to pay for such a thing.

Names

Warbanners name themselves after their heraldic blazon ("Boar Rampant") or their band ("Shield-Gnawers' Pennon").

Adventure Hooks

Warbanners are classified as feral if they are cut off from the power of an icon. They might serve some other cause, restructuring their flag to show their current allegiance. Some stick with the colors of their long-dead creators, while others imitate the design of a present-day army, noble, or command that catches their fancy. That said, warbanners are a rare monster; their existence hasn't put most armies off using traditional flags.

It's worth noting that warbanners are unable to fake icon symbols and colors. The magic that created them isn't strong enough to mock the icons. They have to be working for the icon's forces to be able to show an icon's colors.

Warbanners don't cooperate with other warbanners. There's only room for one warbanner at a time on a battlefield unless they are all ostensibly controlled by a powerful icon. Adventurers are most likely to encounter a lone warbanner being carried among squads of mooks.

Banner Out of Time—The squad of soldiers marching down the Imperial Highway looks normal enough. But the design of a hart leaping over a crescent moon hasn't been used since the destruction of the 14th Legion. (A character could recall this point with a normal DC history check for the tier and put the PCs on their guard. Of course, we know that some *players* will have read this book and be on guard whenever they hear the word *banner*. Soften them up with false alarms.)

Human Rabble

Degraded, vicious, and following the wrong master.

2nd level mook [humanoid]
Initiative: +5

Spear, sword, or club +7 vs. AC—4 damage
Miss: 1 damage.

AC	**17**	
PD	14	**HP 9 (mook)**
MD	11	

Mook: Kill one human rabble mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

Crusader Warbanner

All weapons serve. Until they break.

Double-strength 3rd level caster [construct]
Initiative: +8

Whipping hook +8 vs. AC—10 damage, and 10 ongoing damage
Miss: 5 damage.

C: Crusader's banner magic: Roll 2d20 and use each roll (or a lower result of your choice) to determine one effect
1–5: The warbanner's bearer can make a basic attack with a +2 attack bonus as a free action.
6–10: Each different enemy engaged with a creature in the warbanner's band takes 1d8 psychic damage.
11–15: Until the end of the battle, each ally in the warbanner's band gains a +2 cumulative bonus to damage on hits with melee attacks.
16–20: The warbanner can make a *false rally* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: False rally +8 vs. MD (one nearby enemy with 15 hp or fewer)—**The target is confused (hard save ends, 16+)
Critical hit: The target can now only save against the confusion with a natural 20 (or until the warbanner drops) and can't flee if the rest of the PCs choose to do so.

Designated bearer: Once per round as a quick action, the warbanner can fly directly above a lower-level ally in its band and designate that ally as its bearer. Alternately, it can release itself from a bearer and fly free.

Bearer beware: While the warbanner has a bearer it moves with the bearer and is engaged by enemies that engage the bearer. The bearer is vulnerable to all attacks but it can use the escalation die.

Conditional resist damage 16+: As feral warbanner.

Flight: As feral warbanner.

Mook morale: Mooks fighting in the warbanner's band gain a bonus to their hit points equal to the warbanner's level (3).

AC	**19**	
PD	15	**HP 86**
MD	15	

"Although our age threatens the world with apocalypses undreamt by earlier centuries, it doesn't follow that the rulers of earlier empires were wiser or less likely to spawn unique cataclysms. Martial folly? I name you ***warbanner****."*
—Jedrak the Elder

Adventure Hooks

Unlike other heroic or ambiguous icons, the forces of the Crusader might not care overmuch about seeing a warbanner devoted to their patron on a rampage.

Chained Gang—Those condemned as criminals might earn a temporary reprieve by being assigned to a warbanner's squad of mooks. It's an amusingly impersonal end for criminals whose sins surely involved personal initiative, mercy, or collaboration with demons. Such squads usually contain human, dwarven, or half-elf mooks. How do the PCs handle such an encounter with possible "innocent" victims in the band?

Suicide Squad—Conquer a hellhole. Strip its demons of their powers. Mookify them as an exception to the rule that most warbanners work with humanoids. Force them to march under a warbanner against others of their ilk. Or against nosy adventurers. It seemed like a good plan to one of the Crusader's commanders, until the warbanner went rogue. Now the PCs are being sent in to deal with the (higher-level) warbanner that is attacking everyone, including the Crusader's troops. If the PCs kill the warbanner before its mook allies, reward them by allowing the powerful demons in its band to regain their full demonic power a little at a time, round by round as they return to their senses.

Transformations—In the vicinity of one of the Crusader's newly conquered forts, three or four feral warbanners get caught in the wave of transformative magic surging out of the former hellhole and reform as Crusader warbanners. It's one of the rare cases in which those flying the banner of the Crusader attack the PCs and the true followers of the Crusader have nothing to do with it.

Orc Lord Warbanner

It's possible the Orc Lord is just grateful that there are some flags he can be certain his minions will not eat.

Double-strength 3rd level caster [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +8

Flagspear +9 vs. AC—18 damage
Miss: 8 damage.

C: Orc Lord's banner magic: Roll 2d20 and use each roll (or a lower result of your choice) to determine one effect

1–5: The warbanner's bearer can make a basic attack with a +2 attack bonus as a free action.

6–10: Add a 3rd level orc mook (see page 156) to the warbanner's band (it's either healed by the warbanner or freshly spat out of the earth).

11–15: The warbanner can make a *flagspear* attack as a free action.

16–20: The warbanner can make a *false rally* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: False rally +8 vs. MD (one nearby enemy with 15 hp or fewer)—**The target is confused (hard save ends, 16+)
Critical hit: The target can now only save against the confusion with a natural 20 (or until the warbanner drops) and can't flee if the rest of the PCs choose to do so.

Designated bearer: Once per round as a quick action, the warbanner can fly directly above a lower-level ally in its band and designate that ally as its bearer. Alternately, it can release itself from a bearer and fly free.

Bearer beware: While the warbanner has a bearer it moves with the bearer and is engaged by enemies that engage the bearer. The bearer is vulnerable to all attacks but it can use the escalation die.

Conditional resist damage 16+: As feral warbanner.

Flight: As feral warbanner.

Mook morale: Mooks fighting in the warbanner's band gain a bonus to their hit points equal to the warbanner's level (3).

AC	**18**	
PD	16	**HP 100**
MD	13	

Adventure Hooks

By definition, the Orc Lord is not pursuing long-term strategies. He's happy to recruit feral warbanners and feed them orc and goblin warbands to increase the slaughter.

Heavy Crew—Unlike the armies of most of the other icons, the Orc Lord's followers don't much notice the loss of their individual will. Non-mook orc warriors, orc shamans, and even ogres have no problem fighting and dying beneath a warbanner. One such band has traveled deeper into civilized lands than most and is pillaging as it goes. Can the heroes put an end to it?

Second Front—A warbanner bearer wants to negotiate a deal with the heroes: they sneak into a particular goblin or kobold (or Diabolist-following orc) town using information provided by the banner's band and disrupt its defenses, allowing the warbanner to slaughter or "recruit" the disorganized survivors. The reward? Information, loot, and not getting into an immediate fight with the warbanner's horde.

"These parodies of warfare play on a warrior's natural fears. Chop them down, burn them, and scatter the ashes a few pieces at a time to make sure they stay dead."
—Val, paladin

Lich King Warbanner

The Lich King's followers have no compunctions about using warbanners to bring more creatures into their realm. One way or another.

Double-strength 4th level caster [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +9

Bladed fringe +8 vs. AC—15 damage, and 10 ongoing negative energy damage
Miss: 10 damage.

C: Lich King's banner magic—Roll 2d20 and use each roll (or a lower result of your choice) to determine one effect
1–5: The warbanner's bearer can make a basic attack with a +2 attack bonus as a free action.
6–10: Each different enemy engaged with a creature in the warbanner's band takes 1d10 psychic damage.
11–15: If any mooks in the warbanner's band have dropped this battle, return one of those mooks to the battle next to the warbanner. (If the warbanner has no mooks in its band, choose a lower result.)
16–20: The warbanner can make a *false rally* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: False rally +9 vs. MD (one nearby enemy with 18 hp or fewer)**—The target is confused (hard save ends, 16+)
Critical hit: The target can now only save against the confusion with a natural 20 (or until the warbanner drops) and can't flee if the rest of the PCs choose to do so.

Designated bearer: Once per round as a quick action, the warbanner can fly directly above a lower-level ally in its band and designate that ally as its bearer. Alternately, it can release itself from a bearer and fly free.

Bearer beware: While the warbanner has a bearer it moves with the bearer and is engaged by enemies that engage the bearer. The bearer is vulnerable to all attacks but it can use the escalation die.

Conditional resist damage 16+: As feral warbanner.

Flight: As feral warbanner.

Mook morale: Mooks fighting in the warbanner's band gain a bonus to their hit points equal to the warbanner's level (4).

AC	**20**	
PD	14	**HP 104**
MD	18	

"It's an old tale. We confuse the ability to summon with the ability to truly create. Worse, we imagine that summoning provides control."
—Sermon of the Creators

Adventure Hooks

Unlike other warbanners, banners serving the Lich King often dominate undead as well as living humanoids.

Typical allies in a band include: Skeleton archers (1st level mooks), newly risen ghouls (2nd level mooks), and ghasts (4th level mooks).

Surfacing: A living dungeon turns out to be festooned with warbanners of the Lich King, but they're not active. There aren't enough warriors in the dungeon to activate them. But if the dungeon reaches the surface they'll all be active, providing the armies of the undead with a magical kick it would be best for the lands of the living to avoid.

The Arena: One of Axis' best gladiator schools has somehow been suborned by a warbanner of the Lich King. It wants to accept the school's latest challenge in the arena, impugning the Emperor's courage if he refuses to let the Lich King compete. The combatants, after all, would still be alive, and therefore not in violation of the arenas' "no undead" policy. The adventure is either a magical mystery to solve or an arena combat depending on the PCs' attempted solution.

The Recruits: The mooks in a rampaging warbanner's squad are ensorcelled citizens of the Empire acting against their will, begging to be released from the spell. As they drop to 0 hp they rise again as zombies. There may not be a solution. It could be pure horror.

"These banners already hunger for death. They even return from death when they seem to have been destroyed. They all served our master once. If we have patience, they could serve him again."
—the Pale Duke

WENDIGO

Wendigo are disembodied spirits torn away from the Lich King by some form of connection with the High Druid. They corrupt and slay until they regain a claw-hold on life as reborn elemental demons.

Spiritual Outcasts

These strange monsters represent a conflict between the powers of the Lich King, High Druid, and Diabolist. Depending on how you interpret the oracles, any one of the three icons could be to blame for the creatures. But it seems likely that none of the icons are served by the wendigo's existence. Wendigo represent some sort of failure of control or authority or loyalty no matter which icon's perspective you're trying to apply. And that's to say nothing of the perspective of normal mortals slain or turned into cannibalistic madmen by the monsters.

Depending on the focus of your campaign there are many possible stories about the wendigo. We'll stitch together one such tale here, but you should feel free to use truths that suit you.

Afterlife Turf War

Wendigo seem to be the result of a battle between the Lich King and the High Druid for specific souls. The High Druid certainly claims some souls as ancestor spirits and in other odd portions of the natural cycles of the world. The Lich King obviously wants to claim as many of the dead as possible.

The fact that wendigo start as undead indicates that these are spirits formerly under the Lich King's control that the High Druid or one of her ancient incarnations tried to retrieve. Perhaps they were loyal to the High Druid in life. Perhaps the wendigo initiated the transformation themselves, seeking to escape from the Lich King via the power of the High Druid.

Whatever the sequence of events, neither the Lich King nor the High Druid got what they wanted. Wendigo are hostile to other undead. They aren't controlled in any fashion by the Lich King; for that matter, they aren't even vulnerable to holy energy like most undead. The only ways in which wendigo are tied to the High Druid is that they can eat corpses as if they were corporeal beings and they don't function well outside the wilderness. Wendigo spirits and elder wendigo take a –2 penalty to all attacks and defenses in cities, on Imperial highways, or underground. Cities and thickly populated areas are off-limits to the wendigo so they fly freely through the land's barrens, harsh forests, and wastes.

There's a third force in the wendigo's cycle. After a wendigo curses some extremely high number of victims, it regains a sort of life. It's not resurrection—the life a wendigo reclaims isn't entirely its own. The wendigo's final transformation summons a demon into a form made of fire, ice, wind, and the wendigo

spirit. It's bad business all around. For better or worse, the demons' unique origins have so far put elder wendigo outside the Diabolist's control.

Here are details on three wendigo-related monsters: the wendigo spirit, ravenous cannibal victims, and an elder wendigo demon.

Wendigo Spirit

Before they ever see it, the wendigo's victims sense the thing's ravenous gaze. It watches, drives, and herds them until their food stores run out and the hills swallow them up like waves upon the sea. When the madness of isolation and hunger turns them against one another, the spirit strikes. Swift as the north wind it flies, and then vanishes as if it had never been.

Large 5th level wrecker [UNDEAD]
Initiative: +12

Soul bite +10 vs. MD—36 psychic damage, and the target is affected by *wendigo's hunger* (save ends)
Wendigo's hunger: Until the target saves, roll 1d6 at the start of each of its turns. It takes the corresponding action for its full turn instead of its normal turn:
1–2: The target takes 10 damage as it bites itself.
3–4: The target makes a basic attack against its nearest or most vulnerable ally (moving to that target if necessary).
5–6: The target attacks the wendigo if it can; otherwise, it does nothing.

Wind claw +10 vs. PD (2 attacks)—15 damage
Natural even hit: After the attack the wendigo can teleport somewhere nearby as a free action.

Flight: The wendigo can walk on the wind. It is not a graceful flyer, but it moves as fast as the wind that carries it. Nearby creatures can see its feet blazing with fire as it runs.

Spirit form: The wendigo has *resist damage 16+* to all damage except thunder damage. A wendigo spirit can move through solid objects but it can't end its movement inside them.

Unseen horror: The wendigo is invisible to far away creatures. When the wendigo attacks, if its target couldn't see it at the start of its turn, the wendigo gains a +2 attack bonus that turn.

Nastier Specials
Curse of the wendigo: If a creature subject to *wendigo's hunger* drops itself (through biting) or an ally (with a basic attack) to 0 hp or lower, that creature also begins making last gasp saves. Failing the fourth last gasp save turns the creature into a raving cannibal; it loses all its normal abilities and becomes an NPC until the PCs find a way to restore their ally (at GM's discretion).

AC	**20**	
PD	15	**HP 100**
MD	19	

Ravenous Cannibal

To those the wendigo haunts, the flesh of each companion promises a course of delights—the halfling like roast venison; salted beef the dwarf; the elf stuffed quail—their blood a vintner's blend of rich dark wine.

Ravenous cannibals may be encountered as isolated hermits on the fringes of civilization or blended into civilized society as perverted killers preying upon an unsuspecting populace. If they appear in force as a secret cannibal cult or a savage tribe, their thirst for blood unites them in a vigorous feeding frenzy.

Most wendigo-tainted cannibals will never become wendigo themselves. But some seem to, and that's all that's required for the world's scattered and desperate wendigo cultists to make a thorough mess of their section of the frontier every few years.

Not all cannibals are wendigo-touched, of course. Madmen, psychopaths, demonic cults, savage tribes, and thralls of vampires also indulge in what could be termed cannibalism. But the wendigo have their place.

4th level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +9

Bloody melee weapon +9 vs. AC—4 damage, and 4 ongoing damage

Latching bite +9 vs. AC (one staggered enemy, or one enemy making saving throw rolls)—6 damage
Natural even hit: Add another ravenous cannibal mook to the mob (it must have been hiding somewhere nearby, or wasn't really dead when it dropped earlier in the battle).

AC	**18**	
PD	15	**HP 13 (mook)**
MD	11	

Mook: Kill one ravenous cannibal mook for every 13 damage you deal to the mob.

Elder Wendigo

Tall as a glacier, mad as the wavering winter storm, the elder wendigo dances the destruction of the world, its blazing eyes the heralds of new chaos and ancient doom.

Huge 9th level spoiler [DEMON]
Initiative: +18

Icy claws +14 vs. PD (3 attacks, each against a different nearby enemy)—50 cold damage
Frostburn: If all three attacks hit, each nearby enemy takes 4d10 fire damage.

C: Flame blizzard +14 vs. PD (1d6 nearby or far away enemies, but not more than esc. die)—90 fire or cold damage (GM choice)
Natural even hit: The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

C: Horrific gaze +14 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy) —120 psychic damage, and the target is confused (save ends)

Fourth failed confusion save: The target slips into madness and becomes a cannibal cultist or wendigo or some other terrible demon-thing of the GM's or player's choice in 2d10 hours.

Miss: 60 psychic damage.

Flight: The elder wendigo can walk on the wind. It is not a graceful flyer, but it moves as fast as the wind that carries it.

Swirling snow and fog and flame: The elder wendigo gains a +5 bonus to all defenses against attacks by far away enemies.

> *"The thing is a cancer upon nature's beautiful countenance, a bleeding sore to which there is no balm."*
>
> ***—Eldolas the guide***

Nastier Specials

Force of disruption: When the elder wendigo scores a critical hit against a target or drops a target to 0 hp or lower, that creature must permanently change one of its icon relationship points to a relationship with the Diabolist, High Druid, or Lich King. Alternatively, a point the character already has with one of those icons changes to involve another icon (of the PC's choice).

The demon stares back: Once per round when a nearby or far away enemy attacks the elder wendigo and rolls a natural odd miss, the wendigo can make a *horrific gaze* attack against that attacker as a free action.

AC	**26**	
PD	22	**HP 600**
MD	22	

Disruptive Elements

Obviously the consequences of the *force of disruption* ability entail some abrupt character development and storyline shake-ups. Use this ability with groups who enjoy—or grimly tolerate—a bit of disruption.

Building Battles

Typically wendigo don't work with other undead, demons, beasts, or humanoids. Cannibal cultists are an exception; wendigo often flit on the winds near cannibal cultists and might sometimes whisper suggestions to them.

Wendigo and the Icons

Wendigo have no goals but the consumption and corruption of sentient beings. They can't be summoned, or reliably controlled, not that some fools don't try. The icons, however, are not fools.

Diabolist: The Diabolist can't do much with the wendigo spirits or the elder wendigo. She has more success insinuating demons or sorcerers among cannibal cults, turning them toward demon summoning and thus increasing her power rather than playing the wendigo's hunger games.

High Druid: A few fanatics have argued that since wendigo do little to attack non-sentients, the High Druid's work to liberate these spirits from the Lich King "worked." But the High Druid's version of nature usually includes people and other sentient beings while wendigo are evil plague spirits who aim to become demons.

Orc Lord: Orcs have seldom been picky about the flesh they consume. Savage orc tribes may devour humans, elves, halflings, and dwarves as an orcish rite of victory. Orcs in the deepest wilds may worship the wendigo, embracing the notion of wendigo madness and the strength and viciousness it promises. Some compete in horrific acts of savagery in hopes that they might become host to a wendigo and undergo possession by the demonic spirit of the flesh-eater.

At this point the wendigo have been around considerably longer than the Orc Lord. His final view on wendigo cannibal cults isn't clear.

> *"We followed the wendigo in the interest of finding its lair and slaughtering the demon that had once been our captain. We followed it forty days into the wild until we lost our way and food became scarce. I'll not speak of what happened after."*
>
> *—Sovern Dale, 5th Infantry*

Adventure Hooks

Wendigo are solitary or paired hunters that make great monsters for a horror game or for a session where the GM wishes to create suspense and tension at the table. Tease the players with hints about what they think they see; call attention to unimportant details like scratches on a tree (from a buck honing its antlers) or blood in the snow next to dire wolf tracks (from the spoils of an ordinary hunt), and mingle these details with the abnormal (burning footprints in the snow, the feeling of being watched). Raise the level of paranoia at the table. Have the wendigo stalk or strike at characters that go off on their own, disappearing again before they get a glimpse of it. While it's certainly possible to include other creatures in a wendigo battle, the tension is often thickest when all the focus is on the wendigo. Wendigo only tend to stand still and attack (and devour) their victims when they know their victims are too weak, too weary, or too few to fight back.

At World's End—A storm gathers in the remotest regions of the world, and some say that they see a gigantic figure striding from peak to frozen peak within the blizzard, and wherever it walks the storm grows stronger. Now snow falls on the tropical lands and the oceans are beginning to freeze. The characters must learn the reason for the ice age and stop it if they can, even if it means confronting the elder wendigo at the end of the world and sacrificing their minds, lives, or souls.

The Wild Woman—When the noble house of Savorn fell to the armies of their foes, their castle was razed to the ground and their line was extinguished. Five years later, a woman found wandering on the outskirts of civilization in rags and animal skins proves to be the young daughter of the house, Elisa. No sooner is the girl brought within civilization's walls than the murders begin—the victims discovered with their bodies half-eaten. Some of the victims come from house Savorn's enemies. What does Elisa have to do with the murders? Is she a wendigo-possessed demon? Did a wendigo follow her into the city? Is someone else responsible for the spree?

Village of the Cannibal Cult—A remote mountain town on the borderlands of the Empire has not paid its annual tithing to the local lord, and no messengers or tax collectors have returned. The characters must guard the new tax collector, Varthan, as he travels to the town to collect the Emperor's due. The characters might contend with dire animals, blizzards, and other perils of the wild before they arrive at the site of the town, which appears to be abandoned. Further investigation reveals a dark mystery beneath the inhabitants' disappearance—humanoid bones gnawed by humanoid teeth—and the man-eating subhuman monsters that crawl back to the town as darkness falls.

WHISPERING PROPHET

Whispering prophets smell like a mixture of cinnamon and rotting fish. Tiny blood flies breed and swarm in the homes of those who hide them. They wear the guise of humanity, but it's hard to believe that they're trying very hard.

Those Who Know Much, For a Price

They usually take pains to make themselves attractive, but talk with a whispering prophet for more than a few minutes and you'll soon know that something is terribly wrong. Perhaps it's the gurgling choke in their voice, the faint squirming of a tentacle beneath pretty skin, or the eager look in their fish-dead eyes. Their voices can be resonant, convincing, and charismatic, but strip away their voluminous clothing and flesh masks, and you'll find bodies formed from thousands of thin, twisted, ink-black tentacles coiled together in the rough approximation of a humanoid shape. A whispering prophet would probably show you this form if you asked it nicely. Not many people ask twice.

Whispering prophets sole stated purpose is to help the members of humanity who have no other recourse. They offer their assistance only to the desperate—those who have been driven to their last options and have nowhere else to turn. Their advice is addictive, like heady drugs, and is generally both accurate and useful. It's hard for a patron to refuse more advice when things suddenly go right for a change, even when the patron must commit one sin after another in order to find wealth and success. It's a slow, methodical method of selling one's soul. With the advice and secrets imparted by a whispering prophet, a patron can quickly turn their failed lives around. Over months or years they can find love, wealth, and respect—as long as they keep the prophet's existence in their home a secret, like never discussing an elderly and insane relative kept locked in the attic, and follow the prophet's advice no matter how horrible it is. Some family dynasties have had the same whispering prophet advising them for generations. Such families tend to be very powerful indeed.

Whispering Prophet

"That one hates her father, and that one knows he's a coward. The robed one in back is planning on blasting you with lightning, but he keeps messing his spells up and will do it again."

5th level leader [aberration]
Initiative: +15

Tentacle caress +9 vs. PD—12 damage, and the target is vulnerable to psychic damage (save ends)

C: Whispered secrets +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—5 psychic damage, and the target's mind is filled with a delusional scene from its past that depends on the roll

Natural even hit: The target is confused until the end of its next turn as it sees a foe from its past.

Natural odd hit: The target is weakened until the end of its next turn as it remembers a past failure.

Rewards of the patron: So long as the attack hits one or more targets, one ally of the prophet's choice gains a cumulative +1 attack bonus until the end of the battle that increases that ally's natural attack roll (so a roll of natural 15 becomes a roll of natural 16 with a +1 bonus, or a natural 17 with a +2 bonus, etc.). The ally can choose not to use the bonus.

Saw it coming: Twice per battle as a free action, the prophet can try to avoid a non-critical attack that hits it. The attacker must reroll the attack roll with a –4 penalty.

Knows the angles: Twice per battle as a move action, the prophet can teleport to anywhere it can see, or to a location it can't see but that has the correct geometry and that it has previously prepared (a lair).

Nastier Specials

Haruspicy master: When an enemy has dropped to 0 hp or lower since the prophet's last turn, as a quick action it can get a glimpse of the near-future. It grants 1d3 nearby allies a +4 bonus to attacks and to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

A special secret: When the prophet makes a *whispered secrets* attack, it can choose to target only one nearby enemy. If it does, it gains a +4 attack bonus against that enemy and the hit effects are save ends.

AC	**22**	
PD	14	**HP 62**
MD	20	

"It is a loathsome and unnecessary use of haruspicy. Why, we have come so far from the days when we needed to spill intestines just to tell the future! These . . . "advisors" should be driven from the world, and the riches of their patrons donated to true diviners."

—Sendiel Belready, following the advice of his whispering prophet to bring in more assets to his divinatory academy

Building Battles

Some whispering prophets show themselves openly as members of staff or the family; others prefer to keep themselves hidden in attics or deep, dank basements. Where a battle with one occurs depends on how the prophet prefers to live.

Oddly, prophets don't have much of a survival instinct for themselves, although they strenuously encourage their patrons to flee before a deadly and inevitable fight. If that happens, the prophet accompanies their patron. If the patron makes a stand, the prophet does as well and may get cut down in the process.

It's rare to find more than one prophet allied with an individual or a family, and they avoid each other except in the rare occasion that each prophet has a different goal in their manipulation of humanity. A typical battle involving one of these creatures will involve the family or individuals they advise, or the guards and mercenaries hired by such families. Prophets almost always know when a fight is inevitable hours before the battle, allowing them to advise their patrons to hire backup.

Some of those who visit ettercap fanes swear that they've seen whispering prophets residing in the corners, listening to the silence intently.

Whispering Prophets and the Icons

Whispering prophets don't cleave particularly closely to any one icon. It says a great deal that no icon claims them, either. They're both an abomination and an embarrassment to any icon that likes to keep secrets. While an icon may use a whispering prophet to learn information or to reinforce a fading ally, they inevitably corrupt their patron, and it's unlikely that an icon would send one to help a subordinate whose health or sanity they particularly cared about.

Archmage: Wizards are traditionally the keepers of arcane secrets, as well as masters of divination. The Archmage occasionally gets blamed for the creation and propagation of whispering prophets. Surely if the Archmage were involved, the prophets' secrets would come in handy.

Diabolist: It wouldn't surprise anyone if the prophets gradually steal souls and are animated by an infernal spirit, in which case the Diabolist is probably behind their dispatch to the desperate. When a desperate woman renounces the gods and prays for surcease, perhaps the Diabolist hears and sends something that can help.

Emperor: Spreading the rumor that royal families retain their dominance through whispering prophets may end you up in a duel . . . if you're lucky.

Lich King: Undead show no particular predilection for whispering prophets, although they have been known to advise particularly powerful and influential undead who seek power. Any powerful undead that can remain in power thanks to their whispers are okay with the One-eyed Lord.

"It is the foulest form of spying. Ruining your soul in exchange for troop movements and battlefield success may be an old tradition, but it's a damn stupid one."

—General Cargar Brokenroad, dwarven commander, while retreating

Prince of Shadows: They certainly match the Prince's style in some ways; they creep in through shadows, they deal in secrets, and they trade in power. Publicly the Prince and his followers disparage whispering prophets and those who require them, however. Using them might even be considered cheating, and while that's practically a hobby for those who follow the Prince, seldom is such cheating this distasteful.

Adventure Hooks

Whispering prophets are tremendously taboo in polite society; proper people simply don't need to use them, and the benefits they provide are never worth the cost. Of course, that's easy for rich and happy families to say while they sit around sipping sherry in front of their fire. For normal folks, people who are desperate to find a way out of the situation so their families stay fed in a rough winter, whispering prophets may be the answer to a prayer and the start of societal success.

Use a whispering prophet as a surreptitious, well-informed manipulator in any political or secret-based adventure. They are always the power behind the throne, and it's possible that the PCs will thwart several schemes from a family before they realize what the driving force behind the corruption actually is.

"I have heard that these creatures actually deign to advise the mightiest of dragons. They whisper of mighty and unguarded treasures to take, rich croplands to burn, fat flocks to devour, all in exchange for a few specific acts. A dragon is a majestic beast, but a corrupted and soul-weary one is to be feared."

—Caliandra Selinstar, Knight of the Greater Wyrm

Second Thoughts—An unpopular politician wishes to hire the heroes to prove that a suddenly successful rival is being guided by a whispering prophet. She is of course, one that was recently cast out by the unsuccessful politician when he had an attack of conscience. Now he's having second thoughts and wants his advisor back, and the knowledge that the key to his success is so close is slowly driving him insane.

The Reluctant Confessor—A whispering prophet appears to the heroes under a temporary flag of truce. It tells them that it advises a nearby cruel and ruthless demagogue, but that the ruler has become even too cruel for the prophet's liking. It offers to provide the heroes with information to take the demagogue down. Of course, this could be real or it could be part of a complex plan to manipulate the heroes into a particularly rash action . . .

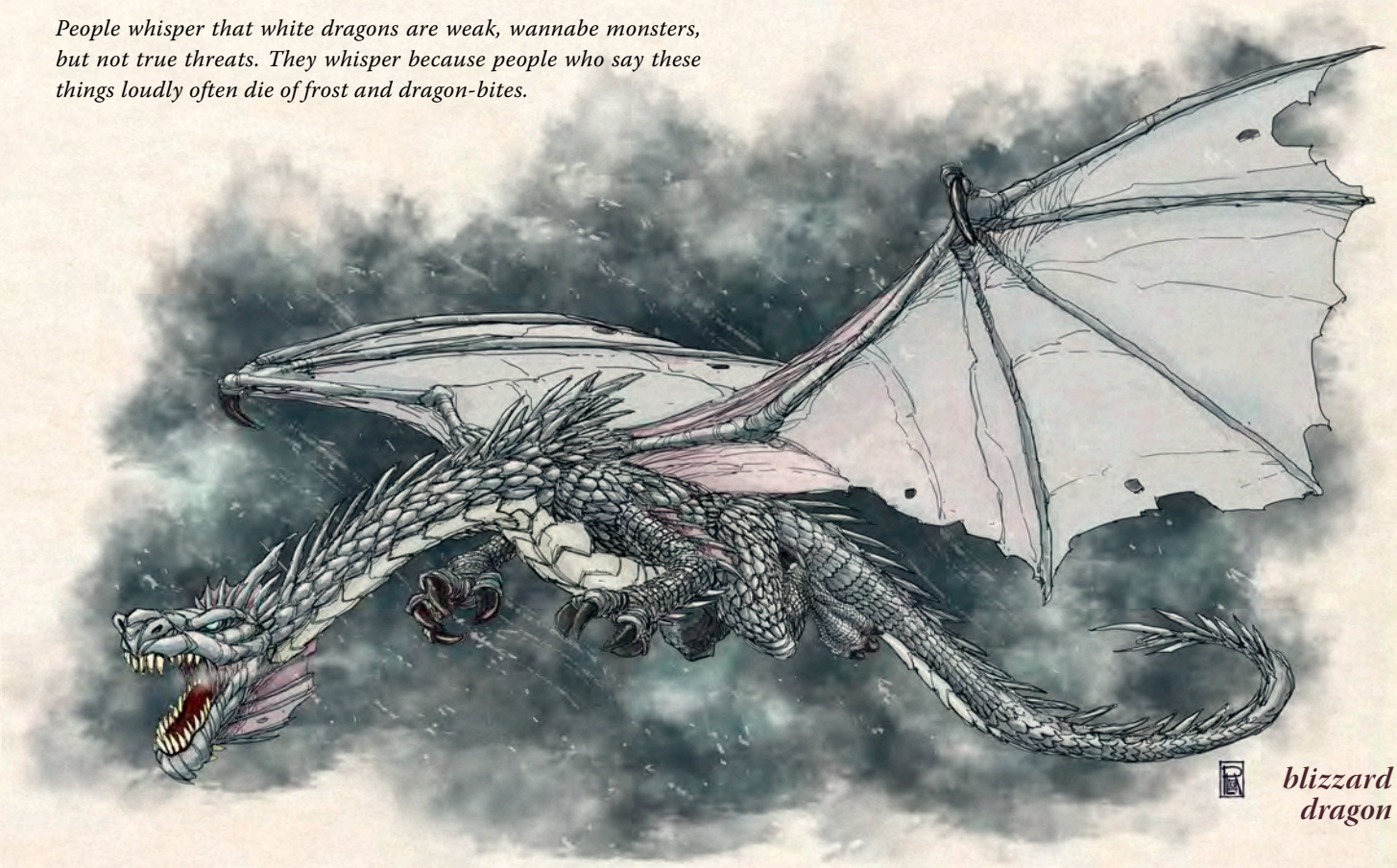
The Whisperer's Web—A whispering prophet has decided to try to control an entire town, setting citizens against one another and making all major decisions for the town. It has many patrons instead of one, and it pulls strings and triggers events to bring about one specific occurrence. What could it be planning, and can anything be done to disrupt the endgame?

"If anyone in this guild uses one of the damn things I'll slit open yer belly myself. We steal secrets the old-fashioned way, with craftsmanship, or we damn well starve."

—Guildmaster Hront, annoyed at pervasive rumors

White Dragon

People whisper that white dragons are weak, wannabe monsters, but not true threats. They whisper because people who say these things loudly often die of frost and dragon-bites.



blizzard dragon

Evil but Desperate

White dragons live in the shadow of the death of their iconic patron, the White, slain by the Wizard King before the founding of the Dragon Empire. White dragons that are more than brutes may live convoluted lives. Of all the evil dragons, whites are the most likely to work as mercenaries for anyone sketchy or desperate enough to employ them. Occasionally, they're capable of suppressing their evil nature to ingratiate themselves into situations that promise more security than the life of an undersized dragon that's unable to stand up for its hoard against the bullying of other dragons.

Keepers of the Dead

Two of the white dragon options in this entry belong in campaigns that can handle shades of gray. The cenotaph dragon and the mausoleum dragon are most easily phrased as enemies of the Lich King who nevertheless take up residence within the Empire's graveyards. They enforce proper sacrifices and religious observances in areas where priests of the Gods of Light are not strong enough to ensure that the Lich King is placated by the proper ceremonies and formulas.

These "keepers" start as devout enemies of the Lich King. They're taking advantage of a loophole in the Imperial infrastructure to perform a task that many "good" beings find distasteful. Meanwhile, in their heart they're plotting revenge upon the Lich King. Performing the ceremonies to the letter of the law is ironically a way of keeping that dread lord pacified.

The loyalties and associations of these white dragons can become unusually twisted. Are they *de facto* agents of the Emperor? Are they somehow related to the Three? Do they have their own strange bands of human followers or do they occasionally work side-by-side with followers of the Priestess? Are they really entitled to consume the semi-holy by-products of the most serious rituals? Are they telling the truth when they mark graves as unnecessary or offensive to the Lich King, or is that part of their own self-interested plundering? How many innocent people have to be consumed before the authorities or the adventurers decide that the white dragon gravekeepers are no longer the lesser evil? Are they acquiring some connection with holy power through the "proper" channels or are they eating holy relics they shouldn't be allowed near? How often does one of these creatures fall under the power of the Lich King—and if one did, would anyone notice?

"They can handle cold but they can't master fear. I ran a mission that depended on a white dragon delivering a treasure chest to the hellhole south of Spider Wood, the one that used to be run by Zhred when it had all those burning elf parts. Instead of flying into the hellhole, the dragon dropped the chest and flew for home. Well, of course we burned the beast when we caught it years later, but by then that ruined chest had cost me fifty souls."

—unnamed hellmouth torturer/procurement agent

Given to the Moon

Moon dragons call those white dragons who mourn for the past "*the old bones*." They call themselves the "*light of the future*" and believe that great deeds could raise one of their kind to the level of an icon, replacing the fallen White. If they're right, the future looks like Moonwreck: a frozen impact zone shimmering in moonlight.

White Dragon Hatchling

Somehow it's born with the innate ability to consume meals larger than its own body in a single sitting. In case you're wondering, that means you.

1st level troop [DRAGON]
Initiative: +5
Vulnerability: fire

Claws and bite +6 vs. AC (2 attacks)—4 damage
Natural 16+: The hatchling can make an *ice breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Ice breath +6 vs. PD**—4 cold damage
Natural odd miss: The hatchling takes 1d3 damage.

Freezing vapors: When the hatchling scores a critical hit, it prevents the escalation die from increasing at the start of the next round.

Resist cold 12+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a 12+ on the attack roll or the dragon takes half damage.

AC	**15**	
PD	12	**HP 28**
MD	8	

Cenotaph Dragon

In retrospect, the Lich King wishes that the original gravepacts had specified that dragons were not proper officiants.

3rd level troop [DRAGON]
Initiative: +8
Vulnerability: fire

Claws and bite +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)—6 damage
Natural 16+: The cenotaph dragon can make an *infused ice breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Infused ice breath +7 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—6 cold damage
Natural 20: The target also takes 5 ongoing holy damage (in addition to double damage for crit).
Natural odd hit or miss: The dragon takes 1d6 damage.

Resist cold and negative energy 12+: When a cold or negative energy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**18**	
PD	18	**HP 48**
MD	14	

Mausoleum Dragon

A larger white dragon that no longer fits in a cenotaph moves on to take up residence in a mausoleum. There haven't been any complaints from the previous occupants, so far.

Large 5th level troop [DRAGON]
Initiative: +9
Vulnerability: fire

Claws and bite +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)—16 damage
Natural 16+: The mausoleum dragon can make an *infused ice breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Infused ice breath +9 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—14 cold damage
Natural even hit: The target also takes 7 ongoing holy damage.
Natural odd hit or miss: The dragon takes 2d6 damage.

Infused blood: When an enemy scores a critical hit against the mausoleum dragon, the dragon gains the following ability until the end of the battle: When an enemy is engaged with the dragon at the start of its turn, it takes 5 holy damage.

Resist cold and negative energy 16+: When a cold or negative energy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**20**	
PD	20	**HP 140**
MD	16	

Blizzard Dragon

When ice falls from the sky and you hear the distant beating of wings somewhere above, you really need to search for cover now.

Large 6th level wrecker [DRAGON]
Initiative: +10
Vulnerability: fire

Claws and bite +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)—18 damage
Natural 16+: The blizzard dragon can make a *blizzard breath* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Blizzard breath +10 vs. PD (each nearby creature)**—20 cold damage, and 5 ongoing cold damage
Natural 18+: The target takes 10 ongoing cold damage instead of 5.
Natural odd hit or miss: The dragon takes 2d6 damage.

Continuous breath: A blizzard dragon can use *blizzard breath* as its standard action during the round after it uses the breath as a free action. Blizzard breath doesn't deal miss damage to the dragon when used as a standard action.

Resist cold 14+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

Wreathed in snow and cold: When an enemy is engaged with the blizzard dragon at the start of its turn, it takes 5 cold damage.

AC	**22**	
PD	19	**HP 175**
MD	15	

Moon Dragon

If this is the true face of the moon, pray the sun will remain the stronger.

Huge 7th level troop [DRAGON]
Initiative: +12

Claws and bite +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)—40 damage
Natural 16+: The moon dragon can make an *ice breath* attack as a free action.
Both attacks miss: If the full moon is within seven days, or if the battle is in Moonwreck, the moon dragon's next *ice breath* attack this battle will deal double damage.

[Special trigger] **C: Ice breath +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—32 cold damage

Lunar resonance: A moon dragon gains a +1 bonus to attacks when the full moon is within seven days. A moon dragon takes a –1 penalty to all defenses and gains *vulnerability: fire* when the new moon is within seven days. For moon dragons in Moonwreck, the power of the full moon is always with them, so many of them lair there.

Resist cold 18+: When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	**23**	
PD	21	**HP 324**
MD	17	

Building Battles

Blizzard dragons sometimes hire themselves out to frost giant jarls as muscle against other clans or for attacks against fire giant holds in exchange for particularly valuable treasures.

While cenotaph dragons and mausoleum dragons find purpose in putting down the undead servants of the Lich King, that doesn't mean that the PCs might not get caught up in a cleansing effort while fighting such creatures in a graveyard or old battlefield. Some isolated dwarven clans also work with those dragons to maintain the rites and protections upon the crypts of their ancestors in the deep mountains, making sure the spirits remain at peace. They will be very suspicious of any adventurers snooping around.

During harvest moons, moon dragons become infused with power and are more aggressive. During lunar eclipses, they either hide away in agony, or are overcome by short-term insanity, attacking anyone or anything that comes near their territory. Moon dragons will work with any creature they believe can further their goals and are often encountered with other moon-fixated beings such as lycanthropes, members of the Elven Court, and lunatics.

White Dragons and the Icons

As noted, all but the most heroic icons might make occasional use of a white dragon's abilities.

Archmage: If moon dragons leave Moonwreck, the Archmage expects his followers to be able to handle them. But Moonwreck itself is a no-fly zone for most mainstream wizards, so there may be opportunities for adventurers who aren't afraid of a bit of chaotic turbulence.

Great Gold Wyrm: An evil dragon is an evil dragon. What part of evil dragon are you failing to slay?

Orc Lord: Black dragons occasionally work with orcs from a position of power, turning the orcs toward the Three. White dragons have no such leverage.

Priestess: Cenotaph dragons and mausoleum dragons aren't welcome at the Cathedral, but the Empire's graveyards are a gray zone that the Priestess can't entirely control. There may be voices in her soul that counsel patience, and that the white dragons might learn more than they expect by ingesting holy relics.

Lunar Cycle

Don't know what phase the moon is in? Roll a d4. **1:** It's within seven days of a full moon; **2–3:** It's not near a full moon or new moon; **4:** It's within seven days of a new moon.

Adventure Hooks

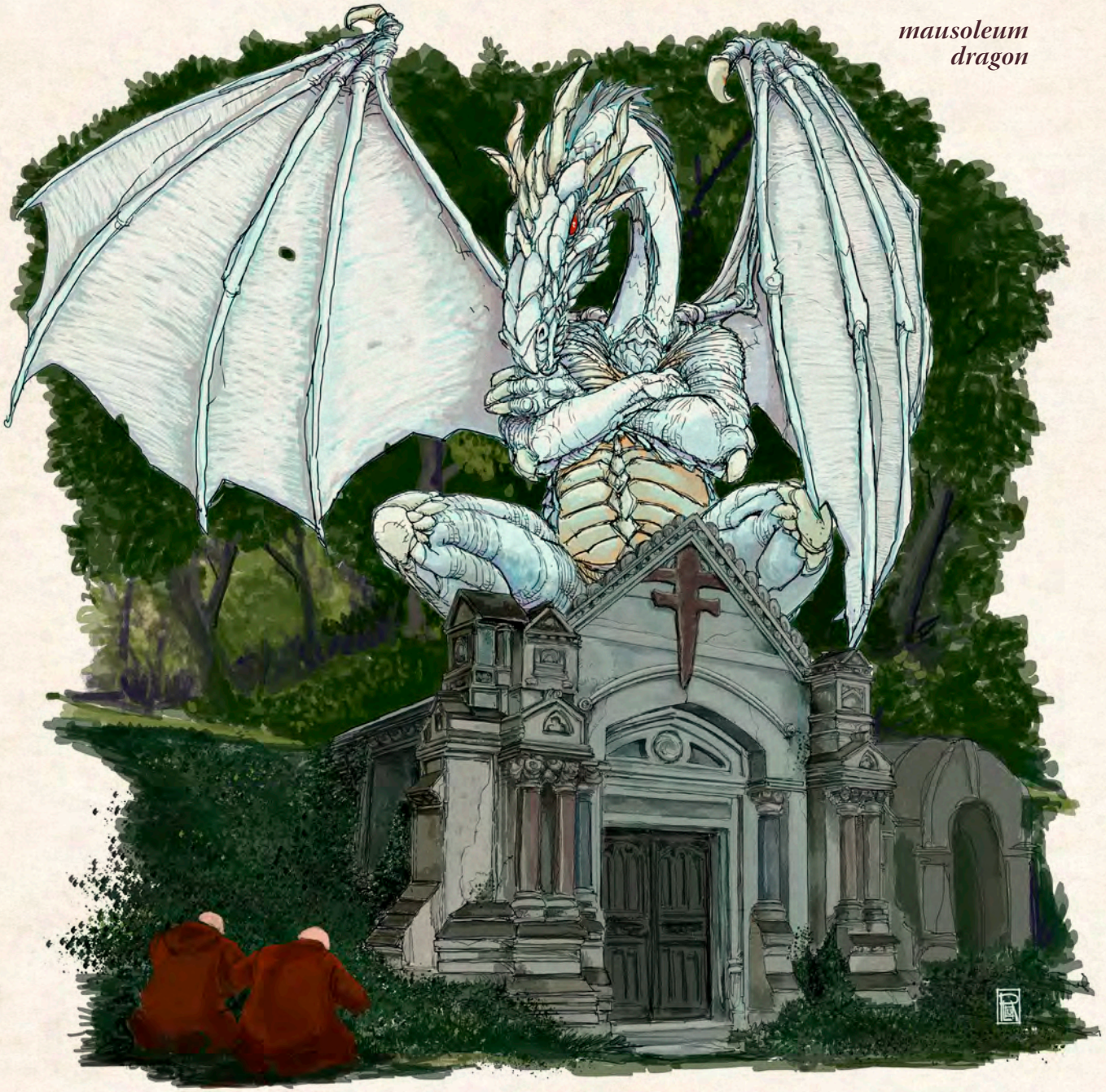
White dragons make great filler villains, working at least temporarily for most any evil master, or perhaps two or three at a time.

Grave Questions—Look at the list of questions that ended the Keepers of the Dead section above. Every question could turn into an adventure.

Premature Hatchery—The PCs are tipped off to a ship that's carrying illegal evil artifacts toward Shadow Port. When the hunt is over and the PCs catch the smugglers, the contraband hatches: a large clutch of white dragon eggs. And those hatchlings are hungry!

> *"Their slide is irreversible. Give them four more ages and they will no longer remember that they were dragons."*
>
> *—Yorlon Elumaneth, high elf sage*

Winter is Walking—A Koru behemoth seems unperturbed by the blizzards rolling off its back to cover the lands its passes through. A pair of blizzard dragons aren't disturbing the behemoth, but the sudden winter they bring and their raids for food and treasure require a response. If the PCs appreciate the cold and want to parley, cue an intervention led by forces of the High Druid.



mausoleum dragon

Wibble

If the legends are true, wibbles were created inadvertently as a side effect of a semi-automatic error monitoring system in wizard academies. If those same legends can be believed, the wizards responsible somehow managed not to lose their tenure.

Arcane Plague or Just Poor Spellcasting?

Other legends, as is customary, blame wibbles on the reign of the Wizard King. But the other monsters attributed to the Lich King's former title are usually a lot more deadly than these weird little floating motes of arcane energy.

Wibbles look like a loosely clumped group of dirty-brown or purple soap bubbles, floating and bumping along together. Each bubble is about the size of a guinea pig. A specific wibble will be composed of anywhere between four and fourteen bubbles—the number shifts as the wibble moves and takes damage. Very rarely the component bubbles twist themselves into recognizable shapes, but it's generally regarded as bad luck to see shapes in wibbles, because it means you're paying too much attention to them and you might make more. Claiming that you can communicate with wibbles is even worse. Get. A. Life.

Despite all attempts to hunt down and exterminate the metaspells that lead to wibble creation, wibbles continue to more-or-less spontaneously erupt in areas that experience more than their share of magic fumbles—*arcane* fumbles, to be precise, and nearly always wizardry-related. Bardic academies have never had the serious problems with wibbles that wizard academies have, though repeated bardic fumbles have been known to generate a wibble or two. Wibbles created by sorcerous mishaps are even rarer.

Somehow widely separated wibbles manage to find each other and join in small packs. They sweep through the world in random directions, heading underground when possible.

Unlike many other monsters that are constantly a threat, wibbles often float by an adventuring party, a merchant's wagon, a family picnic, or even an entire village without causing any fuss. Wibbles ignore other beings until one of three conditions occur: a) someone attacks a wibble; b) a sentient creature bleeds profusely nearby a wibble; or c) someone casts a spell nearby a wibble. Once one of those conditions occurs, wibbles begin

attacking any creature they can reach, more or less randomly. They don't take sides other than the side of wibbles vs. the world. They don't even preferentially target profusely bleeding spellcasters. Every other sentient being is a target.

Animals that are less intelligent than people don't appear to count. Wibbles pay attention to those with sentience, the type of people capable of casting spells. A flotilla of wibbles will float right past wolves feasting on a deer. But if those wolves were feasting on a still-breathing gnome? Wibble rampage.

Wibble

1st level mook [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +1

R: Force burp spell +6 vs. PD—4 force damage

Disengaged: Wibbles gain a +5 bonus to disengage checks. They also don't remain engaged with their foes and will move every turn in battle. When they fail a disengage check, a wibble moves away anyway.

Eruptive blorp: When an enemy hits a wibble with a melee attack, it takes force damage equal to its level.

Flight: Wibbles waft about. They can fly well enough to ignore most wind, but not strong gale winds.

Whiff and wibble: When a creature makes a non-spell attack against a wibble and rolls a natural 1–2, 1d3 new wibbles are created in the same area. These new wibbles typically melt back into their "parent" at the end of a battle if not destroyed, but sometimes they remain separate and drift off on their own.

AC	**13**	
PD	13	**HP 6 (mook)**
MD	13	

Mook: Kill one wibble mook for every 6 damage you deal to the mob.

"No, I'm not going to tell you what wibbles are actually good for. If you're still so interested after the next round of negotiations, I'll have my demons drop you off at a hellhole and you can pursue the question with the locals."

—Jaklyn, summoner

"No one sees wibbles created by sorcery because any sorcerer who creates a wibble is obligated to kill all witnesses."

—Three-Tooth, Blue sorcerer

Building Battles

Wibbles don't team up with other creatures. It's just wibbles all the way down. On the other hand, the whole "triggered-by-blood" thing means they have a tendency to show up in the middle of a battle and start force-burping on everyone involved. Or on just the humanoids if it's a fight against animals or oozes or something the wibbles can't be bothered to target.

Wibbles and the Icons

The Archmage is apparently unable to untangle himself from the Wizard King's legacy of the past, so he makes the best of it. With the threat of being assigned to the Wibble Patrol, Horizon's bureaucrats tend to conduct themselves a notch or two better than bureaucrats conduct themselves everywhere else. The Lich King has been quiet on the subject of wibbles.

Adventure Hooks

As an unintentional byproduct of clumsy arcane activity, wibbles might be a bit more useful than they would at first appear. On the other hand, there's not a whole lot going on with them, except for the fear-of-whiffing-duplication. So when the PCs are tired of wibbles, don't force the issue; it's a flavor that could pall.

Cultist Giveaway: If you're in the middle of nowhere, out in the wilds or the wastes or the mountains of the giants, and you're suddenly a spectator as a flotilla of wibbles trundle and bundle past against the wind, you just got a clue that there's more going on there than you'd expect. Someone nearby is using arcane magic badly. It's like a big "Kick Me" sign plastered on the cultists' hidden temple. (Cultists never seem to pick up on the Wibble Patrol concept.)

Koru Wibble: One of the Koru behemoths is sending off a veritable plume of wibbles. They don't bother the Koru any, but the same can't be said for the lands near the migration path. Someone needs to get up there and find out what is going on. It's not like whoever is responsible could be a powerful wizard, if they're screwing things up this badly. Right?

Zorigami

"I remember my builder's hands. They were rough, scarred from gears cutting and tools breaking. But they moved like birds. They built me without me ever feeling them. When the last bolt was tightened, my creator whispered in my ear. The last words of a last breath. The first words of the rest of my life. I know my purpose. There are few others in any age who can say the same."

—Kliltikbong, apex zorigami

dawn zorigami

The Beating Clockwork Heart of the World

Zorigami are living clockwork creatures built with brass-like gears that turn in perpetual motion. Each clockwork has a unique, porcelain face. The zorigami are the timekeepers of each age. All the zorigami are built at the beginning of the age. As the zorigami get older, they increase in size. They don't grow like living beings, but build themselves up with parts discovered in their travels. One by one the zorigami are ruined by natural disasters, battles, and eventually each other. When the last zorigami dies, the age begins its tumultuous end. If the icons are privy to this knowledge, they keep it to themselves.

Dawn zorigami are small clockworks built to be spread out throughout the world. They are most often seen during the beginning of an age. These zorigami seek out all the experiences the age has to offer. They are playful and curious, which usually gets them into trouble. They are also social creatures that don't understand the lines between good and evil. They often befriend hostile creatures or are tricked by malevolent creatures into working for them. The dawn zorigami generate a field of slowed time for their own protection. They are very delicate in this phase and use the time field to escape whatever dangers threaten them in the world.

Apex zorigami are at the height of zorigami power. They are lithe machines who built themselves up for maximum efficiency. To survive in the dangerous world, they become deadly combatants. Apex zorigami move with a speed and precision that few truly appreciate. They are bold adventurers in their own right, unafraid of the dangers that threatened them when they were first built. Apex zorigami operate in packs for protection and often push each other to bold challenges, creating a stirring sense of brotherhood among them. They quickly learn that time is limited and enjoying the thrills of the world is a game for the young.

The dusk zorigami have completed their construction and seek out other zorigami to battle to the death. The victorious zorigami repairs itself from the remains of its fallen brethren. The last zorigami will wind down naturally from lack of new parts if it isn't destroyed first.

Somehow the zorigami always return at the start of the next age, but it's unclear who builds the newest set. Legends speak of a creator figure called the Midnight Zorigami, but legends often lie.

Dawn Zorigami

The egg-shaped thing sticks close to the other creatures. As you approach it, a strange numbness comes over you. Like time itself is fighting on the little guy's side.

3rd level spoiler [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +6

Headbutt +8 vs. AC—10 damage, and the target moves down 1d6 points in initiative order

R: Ray of wasted time +8 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies or one far away enemy)—5 psychic damage, and 5 ongoing psychic damage
Natural 16+: The target also moves down 1d6 points in initiative order.

A moment of silence: The escalation die does not increase the round after a dawn zorigami drops to 0 hp.

On pause: A creature that is reduced to a negative initiative count in a battle involving one or more dawn zorigami moves forward in time, reappearing somewhere nearby in a number of minutes equal to their negative initiative count, presumably long after the current battle is over. The target may be confused by this effect, since the ways of zorigami are mysterious.

AC	**22**	
PD	13	**HP 30**
MD	17	

Apex Zorigami

The clockwork man moves with a fluidity of motion you've never seen. Every blocked attack offers a perfect chance of reaction. Every cut is precise and deadly. You would weep at the beauty if it weren't trying to kill you.

6th level spoiler [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +11

Multi-geared mace +11 vs. AC—20 damage
Natural even hit or miss: The target can't use the bonuses and powers of one of its randomly determined true magic items until the end of the battle.

R: Spray of sharpened gears +11 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies or one far away enemy)—15 damage
Miss: 8 damage.

Lethal parries: When an enemy engaged with the apex zorigami misses it with an attack, the apex zorigami rolls a normal save; on a success, it can make a *multi-geared mace* attack as a free action.

Take five: The escalation die does not increase the round after an apex zorigami is staggered or drops to 0 hp.

AC	**24**	
PD	17	**HP 75**
MD	19	

Dusk Zorigami

The clockwork creature rises from the throne. You can see the patchwork parts welded to its frame but there's nothing patchwork about the weapons cycling through its hands as it chooses between tools for your demise.

10th level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]
Initiative: +18

Arm full of blades +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)—30 damage
Natural even hit: The target is hampered (save ends).
Natural odd hit: The target can't heal using its own recoveries (save ends).
Natural 1–5: The dusk zorigami can make a *shaking the hourglass* attack against a single target as a free action.

C: Shaking the hourglass +15 vs. MD (each nearby enemy not engaged with a zorigami)—20 psychic damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)
Natural even hit: The escalation die increases by one.
Natural odd hit: The escalation die decreases by one.

The ticking clock of its own mortality: While it's staggered, the dusk zorigami uses the escalation die.

AC	**28**	
PD	23	**HP 200**
MD	23	

Nastier Specials

The zorigami currently enjoy time-manipulation powers that mess with the escalation die. Those powers could extend beyond such mechanics. While a zorigami is in the battle, all ongoing damage could require a hard save to end as the zorigami speeds up the bleeding of a wound or the burning of acid. Or abilities that affect initiative could reduce it by double the normal amount. Speeding combat makes battles more exciting but deadlier, while slowing it down offers more tactical satisfaction at the cost of devoting hours of play time to minutes in the game world.

Building Battles

Dawn zorigami can be encountered almost anywhere—their curiosity and self-preservation skills might see them allied with most any intelligent creature, especially prismatic ogre mages. Apex zorigami travel in packs of their own kind and will often test themselves against adventurers at the urging of their comrades. Some groups get invited to the estates of the rich and powerful, who hold grand tournaments that are open to all comers to see who can best the zorigami—it's a sign of great prestige to host one of these rare tournaments. Dusk zorigami are mostly concerned about finding others of their kind to battle, but this passion can lead them to work with unsavory sorts who trade knowledge of their rivals for assistance. Rakshasas, in particular, seem to use this ploy quite often.

Zorigami and the Icons

Archmage: The Archmage is fascinated by constructs. The zorigami aren't his work, but one suspects he wishes they were. The fact that he hasn't successfully reverse-engineered them or figured out how to control them doesn't mean he is going to stop trying. The Archmage's lieutenants always have time for adventurers bearing clockwork gifts.

Dwarf King: Dwarves have a reputation for meticulous craftsmanship and building things to last. The dwarf-forged, should they exist in your setting, could be reverse-engineered zorigami. They could also be the zorigami themselves, which would give the Dwarf King immense power if he knows how to build them. It's more likely, however, that he isn't their creator and seeking out the origin of the zorigami could become an obsession above and beyond his duties as ruler. The Dwarf King seeks these creatures as an artist first and as a ruler second. Destroying them is a sure way to gain his ire.

Lich King: Immortality through undeath is how the icon stays in power. When there are other avenues to living forever, the Lich King is humbled. He doesn't handle humility well and actively seeks the destruction of the zorigami. Should that bring about the end of the age, as the legends claim, so be it. Better that he holds the knife that slits his throat.

apex zorigami

Clockwork Management

Zorigami are an element that offers a chance to tell stories beyond the current age. There have been twelve known ages before this one, with plenty of heroes, villains, and icons in each. The zorigami offer a living link to these eras, either as relics that survived or as the clock ticking down the length of the 13th Age. Even if the rumored midnight zorigami is now the ultimate progenitor of the clockwork people, someone else originally created them for a purpose. Exploring that purpose could be the basis for an entire campaign. High fantasy offers a chance to muck about in areas that are normally contained in science and speculative fiction.

Flashbacks to a previous age can tie in a theme of fate to a campaign. A zorigami might reveal that the heroes were a band that came together in an earlier age. They have returned because the current age is at a crossroads, and they are needed again. Take it a step further, and the adventurers could be some of the icons from the previous age. They could have joined together to reclaim their status. They could be in this age to make sure the current icons don't make the same mistakes that ended the earlier age. The zorigami have witnessed it all in their incarnations.

Linking the zorigami to the past offers a good connection to the previous ages. Their timelessness could also provide clues to future ages. The past, present, and future have no distinctions for zorigami, and perhaps they know the future because of their insight into the mechanics of the universe. Such power would make the zorigami valued by the icons and those who wish to usurp them. It's also bound to cause friction in a group of heroes, especially if a zorigami says that one in the group will betray the rest, for example.

The zorigami can also function as guards against timeline alterations. Much like white blood cells, they show up when a change to the natural order (an infection) breaks out and go after the offenders. Huge magical events could cause divergent timelines and the zorigami are deployed to make sure that everyone stays in their lane. Perhaps the PCs believe that the event serves the greater good and are actively enabling it, or perhaps the PCs are playing "evil" versions of themselves who have entered the world to make things go their way. Either way, the zorigami are there to stop them so that things happen the way they should.

> *"They may not be demons, but they are certainly not allies. Still, they serve their uses. Placing a gear on the tongue of a possessed man freezes him in place until the General can deal with him."*
>
> *—Kurosa, gnome paladin*

Time travel is a tricky subject to handle, but the zorigami are an excellent key to unlock the door. The zorigami could enlist the adventurers to help a time traveler with a powerful artifact bent on shaping history in his own image. If the adventurers are slaughtered in the future and one lone survivor somehow travels back in time to warn of the impending doom, the zorigami hunt this traveler relentlessly. Plant the seeds for a time war during the adventurer tier and then let the fun fly at the epic levels of a campaign with rousing battles across time and space itself.

Names

Zorigami names are appropriated from their language. They speak through a complex series of clock noises, such as ticking, the clunk of gears turning the hour hand, or the chimes of the day. They don't differentiate between male and female (though their forms may mimic these ideas). Names include Bingtickclick, Tacktacktack, Clunkbongbong, and Tickticktictickbong.

Adventure Hooks

A Clockwork Dilemma—A storm drives the adventurers into a noble's castle. During a feast in the heroes' honor, the intrigues of the noble family threaten to overcome everyone. A chance moment reveals that the entire family is made of human-looking clockworks.

The Assembled Man—The adventurers find an unusual piece of metal or a gear in a treasure hoard. They find more pieces in other raids until they have enough to assemble a zorigami. The zorigami can protect the adventurers but only after it's built. Until then, all the icons are hunting the group—even those friendly with the party.

Monster Creation

Sometimes a game doesn't have the exact monster that you want. When this happens, you have three options: reskinning, tweaking, or making a monster from scratch. We're going to walk you through the three approaches. Together we'll create a fire-monkey, a flaming winged gorilla, and an evil wizard.

Reskinning an Existing Monster

Reskinning is changing a monster in minor cosmetic ways. Let's use the example of a fire-monkey, a monster we just made up. There are no stats for it and we need some.

First think about what the monster is. It's a monkey, so it's probably not a high-level creature. It's on fire. It attacks in packs. Flipping through the monsters in the *13th Age* core rules quickly brings up the wolf on page 207.

Wolf

Even the best prepared adventuring parties can be torn apart by something as simple as a pack of wolves.

1st level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +4

Bite +5 vs. AC—5 damage
Pack attack: This creature gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage for each other ally engaged with the target (max +4 bonus).

AC 17
PD 15 **HP 28**
MD 11

Okay, that looks promising—let's turn it into a fire-monkey . . .

Fire-Monkey

The Cairnwood is full of these howling and screeching beasts. At the slightest provocation, they burst into flame, their sweat igniting on them like an oil-soaked bonfire.

1st level troop [BEAST]
Initiative: +4

Flaming-monkey punch +5 vs. AC—5 fire damage
Pack attack: This creature gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage for each other ally engaged with the target (max +4 bonus).

Immune to natural fire: The fire-monkey takes no damage from non-magical fire.

AC 17
PD 15 **HP 28**
MD 11

We've made three cosmetic changes: name, flavor text, and attack name. We gave it an immunity to non-magical fire because it needs to be safe from itself, but that ability doesn't impact spells that use fire or magical flaming weapons. (Alternately, we could have given it *resist fire 2+*.) We add "fire" to its damage type because these monkeys can burst into flames. Now it's a wolf reskinned into a fire-monkey!

Tweaking an Existing Monster

Not every beastie you can imagine has a cognate in a pre-existing monster. Sometimes you can find a close match that needs tweaking. We want a flying fire-gorilla for an evil wizard to ride. The drider from page 223 of the core rules fits best, but isn't exactly what we need, so we'll tweak it.

Drider

A drider is a drow transformed into a centaur-like combination of elf and giant spider. Diverse curses have created driders, but in the 13th Age, most driders owe allegiance to dark gods, particularly a drow spider goddess whose name elves are loath to pronounce.

Large 6th level caster [BEAST]
Initiative: +10

Sword or mace +9 vs. AC—20 damage
Natural even hit: The drider can make a *poison bite* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Poison bite +9 vs. PD**—10 poison damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

R: Lightning bolt spell +11 vs. PD—30 lightning damage
Natural even hit: The drider can make a lightning bolt spell attack against a second nearby enemy, followed by a third and final different nearby enemy if the second attack is also a natural even hit.

C: Web attack +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—the target is hampered (save ends)
Limited use: 1/round as a quick action, if the escalation die is even.

AC 21
PD 15 **HP 170**
MD 20

The *sword or mace* attack can be reskinned to a mighty gorilla punch, and the poison bite is easy enough to reskin to a flaming bite. The drider's *web* attack and *lightning bolt spell* attack are problems, so I'll need to replace them. The web attack can wait—*lightning bolt* is way off-flavor for gorillas. But wait! Gorillas are known for flinging poop, so why not a flaming poop attack? This is going to be a memorable battle for my players.

That leaves the *web* attack, and as much as a net made of flaming gorilla drool makes me chuckle, I want something a bit more serious. The *web* attack is something that the drider can do every other round, can be used at range yet doesn't provoke opportunity attacks, targets up to two creatures, and imposes a condition. Wait—our gorilla flies, so why not give it some sort of flight-related ability? I think a wing buffet that blows over nearby enemies would work.

Fire-Gorilla

Thankfully rare, these winged beasts rule the areas near the Cairnwood hellholes. Some of them are tameable, and wizards sometimes ride them into battle. Like their smaller fire-monkey cousins, their saliva and sweat burns like lamp oil.

Large 6th level spoiler [BEAST]
Initiative: +10

Mighty punch +9 vs. AC—20 damage
Natural even hit: The gorilla can make a *fiery bite* attack as a free action.

[Special trigger] **Fiery bite +9 vs. PD**—10 fire damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage

R: Flaming poop +11 vs. PD—30 fire damage
Natural even hit: The gorilla can make a *flaming poop* attack against a second nearby enemy, followed by a third and final different nearby enemy if the second attack is also a natural even hit.

C: Wing buffet +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—The target pops free from all enemies and is dazed (save ends), and the gorilla can fly somewhere nearby and land as a free action if it wishes
Limited use: 1/round as a quick action, if the escalation die is even.

Immune to natural fire: The fire-gorilla takes no damage from non-magical fire.

AC	**21**	
PD	19	**HP 170**
MD	16	

We also swapped the gorilla's MD and PD, then raised the MD by 1 and lowered the PD by 1. These beasts aren't very smart, but are tough and difficult to target with spells due to them flying about. We also gave them immunity to non-magical fire. Our flying flaming gorilla is ready for an evil wizard to ride.

Creating a Monster from Scratch

Sometimes you have an idea for an awesome monster that is nothing like anything in the books, so you decide to start from scratch. First decide what the monster is? Having a strong concept will help with all of your other decisions.

A wizard who lives in or near the Cairnwood. He rides a flying burning gorilla. He commands an army of flaming monkeys. He's evil, and uses magic.

Keeping that concept in mind will generate a stronger design. If a monster has dozens of different powers or no uniting theme it will be confusing for you and the players. The theme for this wizard is *fire* and *monkeys*.

Now how strong? We want the wizard to count as a monster that is the equivalent of one and a half 3rd level adventurers, and looking on the building battles chart on page 186 it shows that to do that the wizard would need to be a 4th level monster (one level higher).

The wizard is a level 4 normal creature.

Great! Now flip to page 254 at the end of the monster section in the core *13th Age* rules for guidelines for DIY monsters. It shows the following stats:

Monster Level	Attack Bonus	Strike Damage	HP	AC	Better Defense	Lesser Defense	Fear threshold (HP)
4	9	14	54	20	18	14	18

Only a very few creatures cause fear so we'll ignore that. We'll set the wizard's MD as the better defense at 18 and his PD at 14, because this guy is a wizard—he's bright but not so tough. The core book has a lot of tips about making monsters tough-but-clumsy or larger or otherwise modifying the base stats, but we'll say that this wizard is just a human with a bit of magic to him and leave the base stats. Also, looking at the initiative modifier chart on page 252 of the core rules, we decide that the wizard has only average reaction times, which is level + 2.

The wizard's initiative is +6.

Here's what we have now . . .

EVIL WIZARD GUY

He's evil, a wizard, has flaming monkeys and stuff.

4th level caster [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +6

. . . and some sort of attacks, with around +9 to hit and 14 damage

AC	**20**	
PD	14	**HP 54**
MD	18	

That takes care of most of the basic details of this wizard, except for his name and his attacks and special abilities. Does he have a knife that he'll stab you with, or a staff carved with demonic monkeys that he'll hit you with? What fiery spells can he cast? Before we talk about attacks, you need to know about design technology.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE MIGHTY D20

In a traditional d20-rolling game, when a monster hits it rolls damage dice, and maybe a natural 20 doubles the damage roll. Those three states are about it: miss, hit, crit. Other effects happen regardless of the roll.

The d20 can do a lot more, as you've probably noticed in the monsters that we built above. Here's a list of common possible outcomes: *Hit, Natural even hit, Natural odd hit, Natural 16+, Natural 20, Miss, Natural even miss, Natural odd miss, Natural even hit or miss, Natural odd hit or miss, Natural roll above ability stat, Natural roll below ability stat.* But really you can devise any trigger condition you want.

By thinking about what you want a monster to do, you can key the results of its actions to its d20 attack rolls. There's an example of that when we get back to building our Evil Wizard, but for now let's break down what you can do with each of the triggers listed above.

Hit: The monster's attack roll is equal to or higher than the target's defenses and it has hit. The hit damage and effect, if any, happen. *If a wolf bites you, you take 5 damage.*

Natural even hit, Natural odd hit: The monster hits you, and an effect that happens about half the time it successfully hits triggers depending on odd or even. *If a dire bear hits you, then half the time it deals 2d6 extra damage.*

Natural 16+, Natural 18+, etc.: The monster has made a really effective attack or series of attacks, opening up the way for something exceptional to happen. The chance of the extra effect triggering is 5% per point of the range that is set. You can have multiple instances of trigger numbers with different effects that are either cumulative or not. *If a black dragon hits you with a claw and bite attack with a 16+, not only do you take 18 damage from the savage mauling but also 10 ongoing acid damage from the acidic saliva that splashes over you.*

Natural 20: As above, but the damage is also doubled because it's a critical hit.

Miss: The monster's attack wasn't as effective as it could have been, but it still has some impact. You can design monsters with miss damage or miss effects. *For example, a bulette deals 45 damage on a hit with its* terrible bite *attack, and 22 damage on a miss. Even getting head-butted by a bulette that misses biting you still really hurts! Flesh golems that miss heal themselves.*

Natural even miss, Natural odd miss: The monster has missed you, but it does something interesting that only happens about half the time when it misses, depending on odd or even. *A half-orc tribal champion heals itself on an odd miss.*

Natural even hit or miss, Natural odd hit or miss: Something interesting has happened that only triggers about half the time. *On a natural even roll some dragons can bite as a free action. If a stone golem rolls even you become hampered, but if it rolls odd you are dazed.*

Natural roll above [ability stat]: If monster's natural attack roll is higher than one of the target's stats, something interesting happens, regardless of any hit or miss effects. This is usually a bad thing for the adventurer. We mainly use it for environmental conditions surrounding creatures that are full of disease or breathe out an illness-causing misama, or for creatures that trap an area and try to trick you into setting off traps. *If a ratling filth-wizard attacks you and the natural attack roll is higher than your Constitution, you catch a disease—YUCK!*

Natural roll below [ability stat]: If the monster's natural attack roll is lower than one of the target's stats, something interesting happens, usually beneficial for the adventurer. I use it for creatures that have an always-on illusion that can be pierced. *If a psychedelic dream-moth attacks you and the natural attack roll is lower than your Wisdom, you see through the illusion and gain a +2 attack bonus against it.*

In *13th Age* we treat attack rolls as how well a monster is doing using a particular attack strategy, not how well a creature has performed an individual sword swing or claw swipe. When a dragon makes a bite attack she is not "performing a bite," but rather biting and gnashing and snapping her teeth as she thrashes her head from side to side breathing dragonfire. By using the range of possible outcomes on a d20 roll you can map the possible outcomes of an attack.

You'll notice that most *13th Age* monsters don't roll damage—with the d20 roll having interesting and cool effects, you don't really need an extra damage variable. Here's what Jonathan Tweet has to say on the subject of flat damage for most monsters:

"It sounds like a crazy idea, but it works. Why does it sound crazy but play well? Because rolling damage feels like a really big deal but it's not. Rolling damage is a lot of arithmetic but it adds little variability. The d20 attack roll contributes more to how much damage you deal than the damage roll itself. The maximum roll on a die, the best damage you can hope for, is less than twice as much as average. If there's a big bonus on the roll, it's a lot less than twice as much damage. Why bother?"

Now back to our evil wizard. We want to give the wizard an attack where he summons a fire-spirit that burns enemies. Fire spirits are tricky to summon, so if the spell fails he'll do something defensive like wrapping the remains of the failed spell around himself as mystical armor.

R: Fire spirit +9 vs. PD—10 fire damage

Miss: The wizard gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

We dropped the damage down by 2 under baseline because the wizard is doing something that helps him out even if he misses. Since the attack is targeting PD we would normally give it slightly less than the recommended attack bonus, but because this is a ranged attack and he can't use it in melee, we'll leave it, since a PC can easily engage the wizard and shut him down. Instead we'll drop the damage by a further 2 to 10 fire damage. The attack should hit often, but it's not as powerful as it could be.

We think the wizard should also have some sort of melee attack. We picture him riding his gorilla into battle and laying about him with a flaming staff, covered in fire and shouting arcane words of power. We could give him a melee attack, and a separate flame cloak ability, and also an arcane word of power ability, but really the wizard laying about himself with a flaming staff and shouting arcane words of power and being covered in fire is all one attack strategy.

Flaming staff +9 vs. AC—12 fire damage

Natural 16+: The target takes 4 extra fire damage.

Natural even hit: The wizard can target a second enemy with this attack roll.

Natural even miss: When a creature is engaged with the wizard at the start of its turn, it takes 4 fire damage.

So on a hit the wizard does 12 fire damage, but if it's a good hit, then he deals 16 fire damage. That averages out to 14 fire damage per hit, which is where the baseline stats says we should be. Half the time the wizard hits, he can attack a second target with his staff as he swings the staff wildly like a madman. Note that we haven't made this a second separate attack that could allow more specials to trigger, he simply includes a second target in his current attack and applies that attack roll to both targets. Lastly, half the time that the wizard misses he covers himself in fire, making himself dangerous to be around if you are attacking him.

We also want an attack that imposes a condition. He's a fire wizard so something that makes characters vulnerable to fire works well, and we like the idea that the wizard uses mental control (maybe the fire-monkeys obey his mental commands).

R: Lure of the flames +7 vs. MD—12 psychic damage

Natural roll above Int: The target is vulnerable to fire damage (save ends).

It's a psychic attack that hurts people, and maybe makes them stare at the flames and stay too close for a little too long. We've dropped the damage from 14 to 12, and dropped the bonus from +9 to +7, because becoming vulnerable to fire when there is going to be so much fire flying around makes it even more deadly.

The key idea here is that a GM only needs to pick the attack and roll a single d20, the technology of the d20 does the heavy lifting.

The Technology of the Escalation Die

The escalation die is a d6 that goes up in value every round of combat after the first, adding to the attack rolls of heroes and triggering their special abilities. The escalation die eventually reaches 6 and stays there (unless the fight somehow de-escalates without actually stopping).

Only a few monsters like dragons use the escalation die the way adventurers do, because dragons are scary. You can use the escalation die to create timed effects or effects that only happen every other round. For example, the drider's *web* attack only happens on rounds where the escalation die is even.

We want to give our evil wizard a summoning ability where he calls forth allies. We imagine it to be like some quick jungle-yodel that a lord of the jungle might use to summon monkeys. Although it's a magical effect, calling forth fire-monkey allies is going to take time, so we decide that round 4 (when the escalation die will be at 3) is a good time for extra fire-monkeys to start showing up. That gives the PCs a chance to defeat the evil wizard before he finishes his yodeling, and a deadline to work toward. If they defeat him before the escalation die hits 3 then all is good; if not his between-spell yodels will attract extra combatants.

Monkey summoner: Starting when the escalation die is 3+, one fire-monkey joins the battle at the start of each round. Up to 4 monkeys can be summoned in this way. Each summoned monkey acts immediately after the turn of the wizard who summoned it.

Back to the Wizard

So now we've created attacks that use the d20 well and have given our evil wizard four possible things to do. He can hang back and summon spirits to attack for him. He can ride his fire-gorilla into battle and attack with his staff while enveloping himself in flames. He can attack the minds of his foes to make them want to burn themselves. And he can summon extra fire-monkeys if the PCs give him enough time. Extra fire-monkeys turning up later in the fight might turn the tide of battle, so to balance that out we're giving him 10 less hit points than he'd otherwise have. We've also given him immunity to non-magical fires because that fits the theme, but not to the sort of magical fire that adventurers are likely to fling at him. All that remains is to give the wizard a name beyond "Evil Wizard Guy" and a backstory beyond "Flaming Chimps." The wizard's mix of attacks and attack trigger designs illustrates how everything works together.

Lyzniakian Wizard

The original Lyzniak was a well-respected and goodly dwarven wizard who created a race of primates that have the ability to defend themselves by igniting their own sweat. Sadly his legacy is a cult of evil fire-wizards who have enslaved the offspring of his original experiments.

4th level caster [humanoid]
Initiative: +6

Flaming staff +9 vs. AC—12 fire damage
Natural 16+: The target takes 4 extra fire damage.
Natural even hit: The wizard can target a second enemy with this attack roll.
Natural even miss: When a creature is engaged with the wizard at the start of its turn, it takes 4 fire damage.

R: Fire spirit +9 vs. PD—10 fire damage
Miss: The wizard gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of his next turn.

R: Lure of the flames +7 vs. MD—12 psychic damage
Natural roll above Int: The target is vulnerable to fire damage (save ends).

Immune to natural fire: The wizard takes no damage from non-magical fire.

Monkey summoner: Starting when the escalation die is 3+, one fire-monkey joins the battle at the start of each round. Up to 4 monkeys can be summoned in this way. Each summoned monkey acts immediately after the turn of the wizard who summoned them.

AC	**20**	
PD	14	**HP 44**
MD	18	

Adjust! Refine! Perfect!

The three monsters above look ready, but what if I use them and the adventurers completely wipe the floor with them within a round or two? If I need to adjust upward for a satisfying fight I can do so by adding more fire-monkeys to fight, or increasing the hit points of the Lyzniakian Wizard on the fly (maybe he has a healing potion tucked away in his flame embroidered red velvet robe).

Suppose the monster is vastly overpowered? I adjust the narrative . . . the wizard drops an amulet mid-fight and suddenly the primates and their evil wizard master all have trouble hitting and start to run away. Before the next fight I'll adjust their attack rolls or defenses downward until I get it right, or rework the "broken" abilities.

It's okay to adjust monsters *slightly* mid-fight, but don't abuse that to "win" a battle. If you are unsure about adjusting things on the fly let the players have an easy victory and analyze why the fight was too easy or hard for them after the game. Be honest with your players and say *"Hey, that monster was new and I thought it was too easy/tough. How would you improve it to make the fight more exciting?"* It might not be your monster design at fault; maybe they have too many magic items (time to send in a Shadow Dragon!) or the players misunderstood what was happening in the battle (next time narrate things more clearly, or let players know things by saying, *"It's obvious to your character that . . ."*).

There is *nothing* to say that a fight has to be fair, but it should be *satisfying* for the players. If the fight is dragging on forever and the players are showing signs of frustration, or the fight is over so quickly that they are unenthusiastic, then you know the monsters need fixing. Fun fights are generally balanced against party strength (see page 187 of the *13th Age* core rules), but not always.

Reasons for a Monster's Existence

When designing your monster ask questions. How does this monster fit into the world? What is this monster's instincts or master plan? What reasons does it have for being here? What does this monster offer adventurers (treasure troves, carried items, body-parts used to make magic items, fame and fortune, just damn tasty)? What reasons do adventurers have to seek it out?

Lastly . . . Go Nuts!

Inspiration can come from anywhere. The fire-monkeys were inspired by Ash's two-year-old son running around with a finger puppet shouting "I'm a fire monkey!". Everything else flowed from there.

When taking a monster from literature or a movie focus on the *core concept* of what the monster does. Some movie monsters have bucket-fulls of contradictory powers, but the film-maker builds a narrative around that. You can't control what the PCs do, but you can build monsters that clearly communicate their own themes.

Whatever your monster inspiration is (movie, comic, novel, fever dream), when it comes to monsters, go for it! Change the names, reskin it or build it new, make it awesome, and play it with confidence.

APPENDIX

Random Demon Abilities (d6 or d8)

1: *True seeing*—The demon is immune to invisibility and ignores any illusions.

2: *Resist fire 18+*—You'll see that the demon resists fire the first time you use fire against it.

3: *Invisibility*—The first time the demon is staggered each battle it becomes invisible until the end of its next turn.

4: *Resist energy 12+*—The demon's resistance to all energy types puts a damper on enemy spellcasters, but at least the resistance is only 12+.

5: *Fear aura*—Enemies engaged with the demon who are below its fear hit point threshold are dazed and can't use the escalation die; see Fear level thresholds on page 200 of the *13th Age* core rulebook.

6: *Teleport 1d3 times each battle*—As a move action, the demon can teleport anywhere it can see nearby.

7: *Demonic speed*—The demon can take an extra action each turn while the escalation die is 4+.

8: *Gate*—Once per battle as a standard action, if the demon is staggered, it can summon a single demon ally at least two levels below its own level. The allied demon rolls initiative and does not appear on the battlefield until its turn starts. (Note that using a *gate* costs the demon an obligation, so some demons would rather flee or die than activate one.)

Random Dragon Abilities (d12+)

1: *True seeing*—The dragon is immune to invisibility and ignores any illusions.

2: *Whipping tail*—When an enemy engaged with the dragon rolls a natural 1 or 2 with an attack roll, the dragon can make an opportunity attack against that creature as a free action. The attack is set up by the dragon's whipping tail but delivered by the dragon's usual melee attack.

3: *Tough Hide*—The dragon has a +1 bonus to AC.

4: *Twisted Mind*—The dragon has a +2 bonus to MD.

5: *Nimble*—The dragon has a +2 bonus to PD.

6: *No vulnerability*—Unlike other dragons of its color, this dragon has no vulnerability. The PCs will figure that out the first time they try to use its supposed vulnerability against it.

7: *Now I'm mad!*—The first time the dragon is staggered each battle, it uses its *breath weapon* attack as a free action that does not count against the normal uses of its breath.

8: *Serious threat*—Disengage checks against the dragon take a –5 penalty. When a creature fails to disengage from the dragon, it takes damage equal to double the dragon's level.

9: *PC-style racial power*—The dragon has one of the racial powers of a player character race. If the dragon's story suggests a specific power, choose that. If you'd like the most common expression per color, here's our take: white (halfling); black (halfling, half-orc, human, wood elf); green (dwarf, dark elf); blue (high elf, half-orc); red (half-orc, human, wood elf).

10: *Raw power*—Until it is staggered, the dragon rolls 2d20 with its melee attacks and uses the higher roll.

11: *Damage aura*—When an enemy starts its turn engaged with the dragon, it takes damage equal to the dragon's level (adventurer tier), double the level (champion tier), or triple the level (epic tier). The damage type is the same as the dragon's breath weapon.

12: *More breath*—The dragon can use its *intermittent breath* 1d4 more times each battle. If its breath weapon isn't intermittent (white and green dragons), the dragon gains the extra uses anyway, making it more dangerous than lesser specimens of its color.

13: *Humanoid form*—The dragon is capable of shapechanging into a humanoid form, usually of a warrior or spellcaster appropriate to its nature and usually not obviously draconic, registering as a normal human or elf or whatever. This ability is best used for long-term dragon characters that make it worth the GM's time to create a double- or triple-strength humanoid monster to represent the shapechanged form. The dragon has the PC-style racial power of their humanoid form, but only while in shapechanged form.

14: *Some Unique Thing*—The dragon has an entirely unique characteristic, something akin to a player character's one unique thing except that the dragon's version may be relevant to combat. GM, if you don't feel like making something up, choose an ability from the list above.

Random Dire Features (d6)

1: *Armor plates*—Add +2 to the dire animal's AC, and add +1 to its PD.

2: *Spiky bits*—Whenever an enemy hits the dire animal with a melee attack, deal damage equal to twice the animal's level to that attacker.

3: *Carnage*—The dire animal's attacks that miss deal damage equal to its level. When staggered, its missed attacks deal damage equal to double its level.

4: *Poison*—The dire animal's main attack also deals 5 ongoing poison damage per tier (5 ongoing poison at levels 1–4, 10 at 5–7, etc.).

5: *Dire regeneration*—When the escalation die is even, this animal heals damage equal to triple its level at the start of its turn.

6: *Fury*—While staggered, the dire animal gains a +2 attack bonus and deals +4 damage, but at the end of each of its turns it takes 2d6 damage.

Unified Monster List by Level and Role

Monsters with a C: in their page number appear in the *13th Age* core book.

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Type	Page
0	kobold grand wizard	normal	mook	humanoid	123
0	squib swarm	normal	mook	beast	179
0	stirgelings	normal	mook	beast	197
0	giant ant	normal	troop	beast	C: 206
0	stirge	normal	troop	beast	197
1	archer stirge	normal	archer	beast	197
1	skeleton archer	normal	archer	undead	C: 246
1	cobbler stirge	normal	blocker	beast	197
1	skeletal hound	normal	blocker	undead	C: 246
1	decrepit skeleton	normal	mook	undead	C: 246
1	dire rat	normal	mook	beast	C: 206
1	ettercap acolyte	normal	mook	humanoid	73
1	goblin scum	normal	mook	humanoid	C: 229
1	gravemeat	normal	mook	undead	97
1	kobold archer	normal	mook	humanoid	C: 237
1	wibble	normal	mook	construct	223
1	zombie shuffler	normal	mook	undead	C: 251
1	swarm of bats	normal	spoiler	beast	13
1	fungaloid creeper	normal	troop	plant	83
1	goblin grunt	normal	troop	humanoid	C: 229
1	human thug	normal	troop	humanoid	C: 235
1	kobold warrior	normal	troop	humanoid	C: 237
1	orc warrior	normal	troop	humanoid	C: 242
1	watch skull	normal	troop	undead	109
1	white dragon hatchling	normal	troop	dragon	219
1	wolf	normal	troop	beast	C: 207
1	giant scorpion	normal	wrecker	beast	C: 206
2	orc archer	normal	archer	humanoid	156
2	splotchcap	normal	archer	humanoid	175
2	enduring shield	normal	blocker	humanoid	204
2	ettercap hunter	normal	blocker	humanoid	73
2	giant web spider	large	blocker	beast	C: 207
2	hook scuttler	normal	blocker	beast	113
2	avenging orb	normal	caster	humanoid	204
2	feral warbanner	double-strength	caster	construct	207
2	goblin shaman	normal	caster	humanoid	C: 229
2	kobold hero	normal	leader	humanoid	C: 237
2	orc shaman	normal	leader	humanoid	C: 242
2	aerial spore	normal	mook	plant	83
2	human rabble	normal	mook	humanoid	208
2	kobold skyclaw	normal	mook	humanoid	124
2	newly-risen ghoul	normal	mook	undead	C: 225
2	pit-spawn orc	double-strength	mook	humanoid	156
2	razor shark	normal	mook	beast	187
2	claw flower	normal	spoiler	plant	161
2	hellwasp	normal	spoiler	beast	113
2	trog	normal	spoiler	humanoid	C: 247
2	ankheg	large	troop	beast	C: 208
2	bear	normal	troop	beast	C: 207
2	boombug	normal	troop	beast	113
2	bugbear scout	double-strength	troop	humanoid	24
2	dire bat	normal	troop	beast	14
2	hobgoblin warrior	normal	troop	humanoid	C: 230
2	human zombie	normal	troop	undead	C: 251
2	medium white dragon	normal	troop	dragon	C: 218
2	orc berserker	normal	troop	humanoid	C: 242
2	sahuagin raider	normal	troop	humanoid	187
2	skeleton warrior	normal	troop	undead	C: 246
2	bat cavalry	large	wrecker	beast/ humanoid	14
2	destroying sword	normal	wrecker	humanoid	204
2	hunting spider	normal	wrecker	beast	C: 206
2	lizardman savage	normal	wrecker	humanoid	C: 237
2	sporrior	normal	wrecker	plant	84
2	swarming maw	normal	wrecker	beast	113

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Type	Page
3	gnoll ranger	normal	archer	humanoid	*C:* 229
3	ettercap warrior	normal	blocker	humanoid	74
3	ogre penitent	large	blocker	giant	149
3	otyugh	large	blocker	aberration	*C:* 243
3	blue sorcerer	normal	caster	humanoid	21
3	Crusader warbanner	double-strength	caster	construct	208
3	drow spider-mage	normal	caster	humanoid	58
3	ettercap supplicant	normal	caster	humanoid	73
3	Orc Lord warbanner	double-strength	caster	construct	209
3	bugbear schemer	normal	leader	humanoid	25
3	kobold engineer	normal	leader	humanoid	124
3	orc battle screamer	normal	leader	humanoid	157
3	pixie pod	double-strength	leader	plant	161
3	trog chanter	normal	leader	humanoid	*C:* 247
3	cave orc	normal	mook	humanoid	156
3	dretch	normal	mook	demon	*C:* 210
3	poddling	normal	mook	plant	161
3	weaver swarm	normal	mook	beast	61
3	dawn zorigami	normal	spoiler	construct	225
3	death-plague orc	large	spoiler	humanoid	158
3	ghoul	normal	spoiler	humanoid	*C:* 225
3	goblin bat mage	normal	spoiler	beast/ humanoid	14
3	imp	normal	spoiler	demon	*C:* 210
3	intellect devourer	normal	spoiler	aberration	116
3	rust monster	normal	spoiler	aberration	184
3	slime skull	normal	spoiler	undead	109
3	spinneret doxy	normal	spoiler	humanoid	120
3	barbellite	normal	troop	beast	179
3	bugbear	normal	troop	humanoid	*C:* 230
3	cenotaph dragon	normal	troop	dragon	219
3	dire wolf	large	troop	beast	*C:* 207
3	fungaloid drudge	normal	troop	plant	84
3	gnoll savage	normal	troop	humanoid	*C:* 228
3	kobold dog rider	normal	troop	humanoid	124
3	ogre	large	troop	giant	*C:* 240
3	orc tusker	normal	troop	humanoid	157
3	braincap	double-strength	wrecker	plant	84
3	catacomb dragon	large	wrecker	dragon	17
3	hell hound	normal	wrecker	beast	*C:* 234
3	hungry star	normal	wrecker	aberration	*C:* 235
3	medium black dragon	normal	wrecker	dragon	*C:* 218
3	ochre jelly	large	wrecker	ooze	*C:* 241
3	redcap	normal	wrecker	humanoid	175
4	flesh golem	large	blocker	construct	*C:* 231
4	gelatinous tetrahedron	huge	blocker	ooze	88
4	ghoul licklash	normal	blocker	undead	97
4	kobold bravescale	normal	blocker	humanoid	125
4	derro sage	normal	caster	humanoid	*C:* 216
4	despoiler	normal	caster	demon	*C:* 210
4	kobold dungeon-shaman	double-strength	caster	humanoid	125
4	Lich King warbanner	double-strength	caster	construct	210
4	ettercap keeper	normal	leader	humanoid	74
4	fungaloid monarch	double-strength	leader	plant	84
4	gnoll war leader	normal	leader	humanoid	*C:* 229
4	hobgoblin captain	normal	leader	humanoid	*C:* 230
4	lethal lothario	normal	leader	humanoid	121
4	cambion dirk	normal	mook	demon	31
4	chaos glorp	normal	mook	aberration	39
4	drow soldier	normal	mook	humanoid	58
4	elder spore	normal	mook	plant	85
4	kobold shadow-warrior	normal	mook	humanoid	125
4	ravenous cannibal	normal	mook	humanoid	212
4	woven	normal	mook	humanoid	121
4	chaos behemoth	huge	spoiler	aberration	40
4	demonic ogre	large	spoiler	giant	149
4	ghoul pusbuster	normal	spoiler	undead	97
4	harpy	normal	spoiler	humanoid	*C:* 234

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Type	Page
5	binding bride	normal	spoiler	humanoid	121
5	gorge dragon	large	spoiler	dragon	17
5	mantikumhar	large	spoiler	beast	139
5	rust monster obliterator	normal	spoiler	demon	184
5	swarm prince	normal	spoiler	humanoid	121
5	wraith	normal	spoiler	undead	*C:* 250
5	drow sword maiden	normal	troop	humanoid	58
5	ettin	large	troop	giant	*C:* 224
5	gargoyle	normal	troop	construct	*C:* 224
5	huge white dragon	huge	troop	dragon	*C:* 219
5	kobold dragon-soul	normal	troop	humanoid	125
5	mausoleum dragon	large	troop	dragon	219
5	cambion sickle	normal	troop	demon	31
5	bulette	large	wrecker	beast	*C:* 208
5	centaur raider	normal	wrecker	humanoid	35
5	frenzy demon	normal	wrecker	demon	*C:* 211
5	ghast	normal	wrecker	undead	98
5	green bulette	large	wrecker	beast	27
5	half-orc tribal champion	normal	wrecker	humanoid	*C:* 233
5	hydra, 5 heads	huge	wrecker	beast	*C:* 236
5	lumberland dirt-fisher	huge	wrecker	beast	28
5	ogre champion	large	wrecker	giant	150
5	ravenous bumoorah	normal	wrecker	beast	28
5	sahuagin	normal	wrecker	humanoid	*C:* 245
5	warp beast	normal	wrecker	aberration	70
5	wendigo spirit	large	wrecker	undead	212
5	wyvern	large	wrecker	beast	*C:* 250
6	centaur ranger	normal	archer	humanoid	35
6	manticore	large	archer	beast	*C:* 238
6	gelatinous octahedron	huge	blocker	ooze	89
6	drider	large	caster	aberration	*C:* 223
6	drow spider-sorceress	normal	caster	humanoid	59
6	centaur champion	double-strength	leader	humanoid	36
6	sparkscale naga	large	leader	beast	144
6	ice zombie	normal	mook	undead	79

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Type	Page
7	frost giant	large	spoiler	giant	*C:* 226
7	large green dragon	large	spoiler	dragon	*C:* 220
7	umluppuk	huge	spoiler	aberration	69
7	hezrou	large	troop	demon	*C:* 212
7	lammasu warrior	large	troop	beast	131
7	moon dragon	huge	troop	dragon	220
7	bronze golem	large	wrecker	construct	100
7	crustycap	normal	wrecker	humanoid	176
7	ethereal dybbuk	double-strength	wrecker	demon	65
7	fallen lammasu	large	wrecker	beast	131
7	hydra, 7 heads	huge	wrecker	beast	*C:* 236
7	phase spider	large	wrecker	beast	*C:* 244
7	volcano dragon	large	wrecker	dragon	168
8	stone golem	large	blocker	ooze	*C:* 232
8	black skull	normal	caster	undead	110
8	glabrezou	large	caster	demon	*C:* 212
8	large blue dragon	large	caster	dragon	*C:* 221
8	ogre lightning mage	large	caster	giant	152
8	rakshasa	double-strength	caster	humanoid	*C:* 245
8	shadow dragon	large	caster	dragon	193
8	elder swaysong naga	normal	leader	beast	144
8	parasitic lightning beetle	normal	mook	beast	164
8	purple larvae	normal	mook	beast	165
8	shadow thief	normal	mook	dragon	193
8	couatl	large	spoiler	beast	52
8	frost giant adventurer	large	spoiler	giant	78
8	lammasu wizard	large	spoiler	beast	132
8	lich count	double-strength	spoiler	undead	135
8	marble golem	large	troop	construct	101
8	stone giant	large	troop	giant	*C:* 226
8	adult remorhaz	large	wrecker	beast	180
8	cambion hellblade	normal	wrecker	demon	32
8	fire giant	large	wrecker	giant	*C:* 227
8	iconic chimera	large	wrecker	beast	42
8	purple worm	huge	wrecker	beast	164

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Type	Page
9	despoiler mage	normal	caster	demon	C: 213
9	lammasu priest	large	caster	beast	132
9	prismatic ogre mage	large	caster	giant	153
9	elder sparkscale naga	normal	leader	beast	145
9	fire giant warlord	large	leader	giant	C: 227
9	hoard spirit	normal	mook	construct	169
9	hooked demon	normal	mook	demon	C: 213
9	ogre minion	large	mook	giant	150
9	wraith bat	normal	mook	undead	15
9	djinn	large	spoiler	giant	93
9	elder wendigo	huge	spoiler	demon	212
9	empyrean dragon	huge	spoiler	dragon	18
9	giant vrock	large	spoiler	demon	C: 214
9	hoardsong dragon	large	spoiler	dragon	169
9	black pudding	huge	wrecker	ooze	C: 241
9	chimera	large	wrecker	beast	C: 209
9	deep bulette	huge	wrecker	beast	28
9	drow cavalry	double-strength	wrecker	humanoid	59
9	huge black dragon	huge	wrecker	dragon	C: 221
9	skull of the beast	large	wrecker	undead	110
10	storm giant	huge	archer	giant	C: 228
10	nalfeshnee	large	caster	demon	C: 214
10	elder manafang naga	normal	leader	beast	145
10	great fang cadre (orc)	normal	mook	humanoid	C: 242
10	spawn of the master (vampire)	normal	mook	undead	C: 249
10	vampire	normal	spoiler	undead	C: 248
10	dusk zorigami	normal	wrecker	construct	225
10	efreet	large	wrecker	giant	93
10	iron golem	large	wrecker	construct	C: 232
10	large red dragon	large	wrecker	dragon	C: 222
10	massive mutant chuul	huge	wrecker	aberration	48
11	medusa noble	double-strength	caster	humanoid	C: 239
11	elder couatl	large	spoiler	beast	53
11	huge green dragon	huge	spoiler	dragon	C: 222
11	greathoard elder	huge	wrecker	dragon	170
11	remorhaz queen	large	wrecker	beast	180
12	huge blue dragon	huge	caster	dragon	C: 222
12	smoke minions	normal	mook	construct	171
12	flamewreathed dragon	huge	spoiler	dragon	170
12	lich prince	double-strength	spoiler	undead	136
12	marilith	large	troop	demon	C: 215
12	ancient purple worm	huge	wrecker	beast	164
13	balor	large	wrecker	demon	C: 215
13	Hagunemnon	large	wrecker	aberration	69
13	huge red dragon	huge	wrecker	dragon	C: 223
15	tarrasque	huge	wrecker	beast	201

BUILDING BATTLES

Monster Level compared to party level	Adventurer Battle	Champion Battle	Epic Battle	Normal counts as...	Mook counts as...	Large counts as...	Huge counts as...
2 levels lower	1 level lower	Same level	0.5	0.1	1	1.5
1 level lower	Same level	1 level higher	0.7	0.15	1.5	2
SAME LEVEL	**1 level higher**	**2 levels higher**	**1**	**.2**	**2**	**3**
1 level higher	2 levels higher	3 levels higher	1.5	.3	3	4
2 levels higher	3 levels higher	4 levels higher	2	.4	4	6
3 levels higher	4 levels higher	5 levels higher	3	.6	6	8
4 levels higher	5 levels higher	6 levels higher	4	.8	8	

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