



No.11

THE UNDERCROFT

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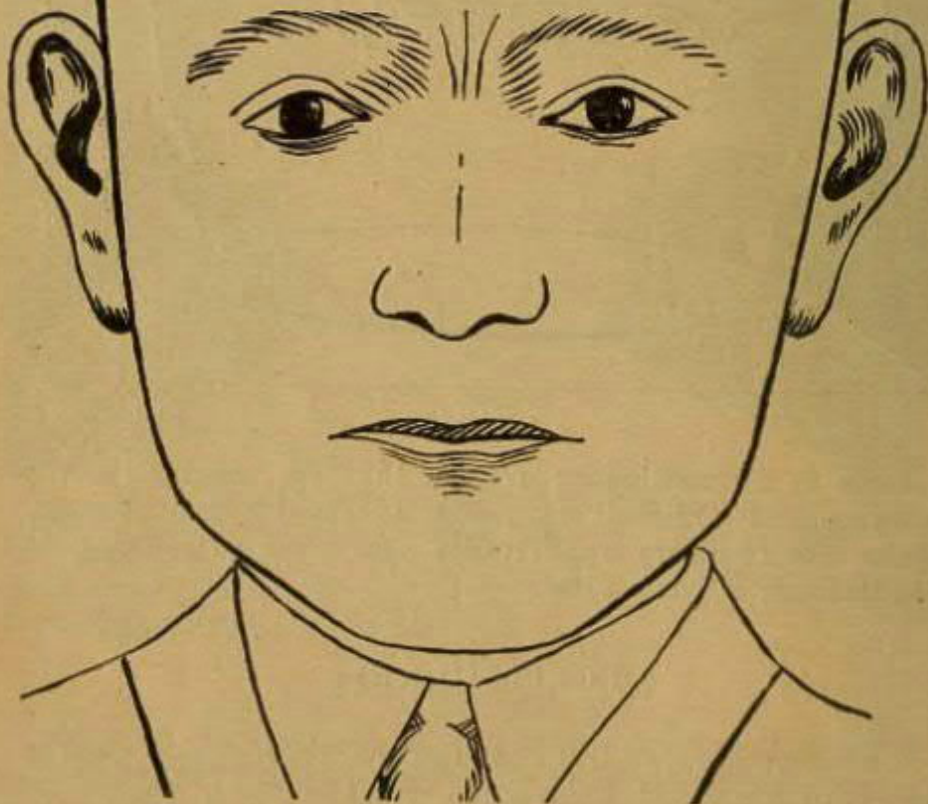
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SECRET HISTORY DO NOT READ

Dungeons and dragons was a game that was made before we were born for accountants and businessmen. From there it entered into obscurity and hid in the unconsciousness of some American children. In the meantime other games happened which did the same thing and for a while were celebrated. Children played them and were happy. Then one day the accountant children got jobs making monopoly games and invented dungeons and dragons again and all the other games went away. Now the world is all dungeons and dragons and hoovers and googles and xeroxs of xeroxs and we're very very grateful.

SECRET HISTORY DO NOT READ

1 It will pay all to remember the shape of this head and face.

The Aulk

The Aulk is a parasitic slug from the Astral Sea that feasts on memories and emotions. Its a defenceless creature that can cause no great harm to a PC, but might offer an interesting predicament and a new way to help provide clues and tools to your players in the form of memories, emotions, whole skills or abilities and spells.

No two scholars can agree on its appearance, due in large part because it's hard to get enough people who believe they exist together in the same place.

The Aulk is rumoured to have the hind quarters of a slug, with a disgustingly fat and almost inflated torso where the Aulk's alleged forelimbs have been sucked into doughy rolls of flesh. The head of an Aulk is said to appear eyeless, or at least have eyes hidden in a similar manner to the arms. Its mouth is a short tube that protrudes from the face, like an ill-formed proboscis and it's head is graced with moose-like antlers made of chalky coral. At least, this is the commonly argued about description of the Aulk.

Aulks are born of the niggling annoyance one experiences entering a room and forgetting what it was they came for, but they sustain themselves on much more precious mental energies. Sometimes they've been found to eat memories, both happy and sad, while others claim to have vital skills or an entire emotion eaten away by a voracious Aulk. One thing is known for sure though, that Aulks eat without any thought at all for what they're consuming and ended up excreting most of what they consume in crystalline spheres of varying regularity - it's said the more uniform the sphere, the more intact the devoured memories.

Though many would disagree on the basis that they eat straight from your brain, these parasitic slugs are wholly friendly and seldom cause harm to their hosts - other than the unfortunate cases wherein an Aulk has eaten the host's knowledge of how to conduct basic self care and keep themselves alive. In any case, anyone plagued by one of these beasts shouldn't have too much

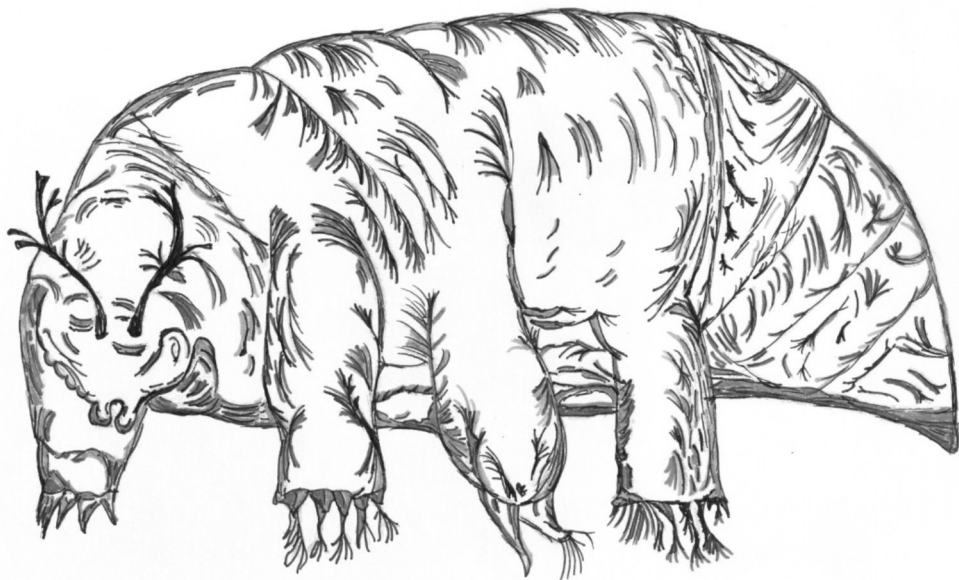
trouble dispatching their hitchhiker if they know a sage who can help them travel to the Astral plane. Of course, Hubert St. John was convinced anyone suffering under the ills of phantom limb syndrome would have no trouble striking at ethereal creatures, so perhaps there's more than one way to skin this cat?

In the event you or some swarthy lads you know do come across an Aulk - exceedingly rare odds of that - AND kill it - also a dubious aspiration as the first memory any Aulk will eat is your memory of it - you might find a few useful bits and bobbled about it.

AULK SLIME: The mucus trail of the parasitic slug is renowned for increasing the potency and duration of memory and illusion magic as well as psychedelic experiences. Don't fancy yourself a chemist? That's fine, in a sealed jar you can pawn this slime off on any budding sage or alchemist for at least 300 SP a jar.

AULK CRYSTAL: Appears to be a small glass orb, roughly the size of an apple filled with anything from the memory of a warm spring day to a wizard's mastery over the arcane secret to turning sticks into snakes. While you won't know exactly what you're getting into - these things don't come labelled after all - you should be able to gauge the general contents of the orb by the looks of it, swirling black clouds with red flashes won't be memories of picking daisies. To use the Aulk droppings, simply press it to your forehead. Once emptied, they can be used as receptacles for intangibles - fill it with the curse that's been plaguing your family for generations, or your fear of the undead. Why, you could even use it to give your porter a spell to use in an emergency. If full, Aulk droppings can be worth as little as 500 SP, but as much as a mad collector is willing to pay depending on the contents. If empty, they should fetch about 150 SP from any reputable alchemist or mage.

Aulk



HD: As many times as it has fed

Number Appearing: 1

Wants: to eat your memories, fears, aspirations and skills to fill the void within itself

Morality: As hungry dog

Intelligence: As dog

Armour: As leather, cannot be harmed on the material plane except by ethereal objects

Move: 1/2 speed

Morale: 4

Damage: Aulks are wholly defenceless and can't even intentionally eat memories that might hurt a PC.

Edicts of la Cattedral della Musica Universale

Seven Heretical Clerics

There's a wide range of gods, religions, cultures, and attitudes to death, the dead, and one's ancestors.

Despite that, *all* by-the-book clerics treat the returned dead as a problem of utter theological importance, which clerics must be specially and violently empowered against; the boot prints of a particularly powerful religio-cultural complex are visible.

Of course, the book in question is an establishment tract. It glosses over various inevitable regional practises which have resisted colonisation or been absorbed, and various heretical offshoots of the accepted orthodoxy.

Tithenites

St. Tithenai laboured in rural isolation, their writings discovered only after their death. Without the benefit of formal theological education, this obscure figure spent a lifetime painstakingly reasoning through the religious problems of a tortured faith, producing in equal parts an independent recapitulation of orthodox theology, seminal new insights, and nonchalant exposition of heresies both existing and novel.

Tithenites focus, like the saint, on a life of humble good works, animal care, and the patient art of beer-brewing; they also violently revile oozes, which Tithenai regarded as not simply unnatural but an existential affront to wholesomeness. They replace clerical anti-undead powers with equivalents which are identical, except for targeting oozes. (Corporeal undead, they regard as merely mobile food for carrion-eaters.)

Tithenites produce St. Tithenai's Salt, a pinkish holy salt stored in brittle glass vials. It functions as holy water, but against oozes.

Sin-Eater

Sin-Eaters are granted the ability to eat evil and wickedness. The easiest way to do so is to ritually bind a karmic weight, troublesome spirit, or unwholesome magic into an item of food or drink; each such consumption inflicts days of fever, shakes and night terrors while the cleric metabolises the badness into many small, irregular matte-black pearls and regurgitates them.

The harder way is for them to swallow a spell or spirit the instant it is cast on or attempts to possess them. This immediately inflicts internal injuries proportional to the evil of the effect; on each of their subsequent turns, they must pass a Constitution save or immediately projectile vomit a cone of necrotic ectoplasm (treat as a 20' breath weapon for the purposes of dodging or resisting). This chilly mist of low-grade spiritual rot will cling to anyone caught in it for 1d6 hours, giving them a sensation of cold, unpleasant slipperiness; this halves all magical healing done to them and causes minor psychic distress to all lawful or good-aligned creatures.



Indulgencers

Indulgencers work within the religious belief that everyone faces a jury beyond death's threshold, to be spared or sentenced to a stay in purgatory proportional to their wickedness in life. They have the power to summon ghostly sinners for a chance to decrease their sentence through posthumous community service.



The indulgencer may retain as many simultaneous ghostly sinners as a comparable orthodox cleric's daily uses of turn undead. They remain until either party decides otherwise, although the ghost has a strong incentive to remain and work on its karmic debt; it will refuse to follow any of the cleric's wishes that it believes would increase its sentence. All ghostly sinners speak the languages and have all knowledge they did in life. Their voices are audible only to the cleric, psychics and necromancers; they are immaterial, invisible at will, and can be stopped only by barriers which exclude scrying or ethereal creatures. They have the same sense of hearing as in life, plus 60' vision in even total darkness and an awareness of other ghosts and strongly good or evil entities within 100'. They can innately cast Mage Hand twice, and Fear once, per moonrise.

One in four ghostly sinners was an arcane spellcaster in life; they have, use and regain spell slots as they did in life, but they permanently know only the spells they had memorised at their time of death. (Depending how entwined their wickedness and arcane career were, they may be reluctant to use these.)

Soapbox Cleric

The Soapbox Cleric trades power over undeath for sway over the crowd. While bellowing a sermon in a publicly frequented place, the cleric is guaranteed to gather an increasing number of mesmerised

listeners. (An additional die's worth per 30 minutes; larger dice for larger settlements.) The crowd can be exhorted to heights of emotion, and ultimately directed at a single task of the cleric's choice. (Your choices of crowd mood tend to be either outrage, or just plain rage. The larger the crowd, the easier it is to convince them to act, but the less likely they are to stick to the task. Of course, depending on your cleric's god or personal morality, general mayhem may be perfectly serviceable.)

Venerator

Instead of regarding the undead as something to be exterminated, the ancestor-worshipping Venerator regards the restless dead as a symptom of the deceased's unfinished business, just avengers against offences to their memory, or messengers of a spiritual imbalance in the world. Instead of turning, commanding, or destroying the undead, the Venerator can compel them to participate in a tea ceremony and discuss their grievance.

There is no guarantee that the dead will agree to any redress, but if they do, they are mystically bound before the gods to desist all violence. If the Venerator completes whatever task has been agreed, the undead freely and willingly return to death; if the Venerator reneges, the dead are likewise freed from obligation (and likely to be *pissed off*.)

Should the Venerator and the dead fail to agree a bargain, both are godsworn to leave the site of the tea ceremony in peace and not return within the same night.

Theofabrikoi

These *especially* heretical cults seek not to worship a god, but through worship to custom-create one that will grant them miracles to their specifications. Theofabrikoi require a quasi-sacred item to use as a focus of worship (usually portable, the better to abruptly flee church agents) – a statue, palanquin-shrine, or other substantial idol. Theofabrikoi cults are usually small (single-digit numbers of people), due to the difficulty of getting larger groups to agree on objectives to sufficiently synchronise their worship.

(Theofabrikoi can't gain spells from their manufactured god of higher than first level.)

Lapeau-Men (L'hommes Enque-dans-la-peau)

These dedicants, instead of turning undead, gain an extra spell per level, each permanently prepared and castable once per day – by having a sacred text elaborately marked into their skin, either tattooed or scarified. Each marking must be visible to any observers for the corresponding spell to be cast; typical Lapeau-Men go as close to naked as their culture and climate permit.

Each of these skin-spells can be any divine spell of a level the cleric can cast at the time they have it etched into them; however, casting one of greater than third level through their flesh will force enough godly radiance through them to burn away all the layers of skin containing the markings (1d4+spell level damage). The delicately curlicued scar tissue that heals over the burn can never be tattooed over again. (Some orders of paladins use a similar technique to inscribe a resurrection spell as a whole-back tattoo of angelic wings, tithing their flesh to their god for a second stint of earthly service.)

Although not strictly necessary, it's traditional for each spell – particularly those of higher levels – to take up more skin, as a show of religious devotion. A Lapeau-Man's precise denomination, geographical origin, and even clerical mentor can be discerned by knowledgeable onlookers, by the style, location, sizes, and progression of his markings.



Circle of the Mole rat

Dwarfen Druid Archetype

“Imagine a circle, but it's made of mole-rats,” goes the first koan, “how many mothers does it have?”. The answer is always one, and she oversees her vast network of druids from deep under the earth, hidden away from anyone other than her children. Dwarf lords court her favour and trade for her secrets through her shadowy beardless children secreted throughout the kingdoms. It's commonly said that anything you might be prepared to say in the presence of one of Mother's Children you should be prepared to say in the presence of Mother.

Favoured Shape - Mole rat

At 2nd level when choosing Mole rat, Giant Mole rat, or Mammoth Mole rat to assume an animal form using Wild Shape the druid retains their ability to talk and cast spells.

They do not get this ability in any other forms.

Disease Immunity

Starting at 2nd level a Druid of the Circle of the Mole rat has immunity to disease.

Perfect Sight

From 6th level onward the Druid loses their regular sight and gains Blind-sight 60ft just like their favoured patron and is blind beyond this distance.

The druid is now Immune to visual Illusions.

Improved Favoured Shape

At 10th level whilst in their favoured shape, the Druid is able to dig at walking speed through natural terrain creating a tunnel behind them.

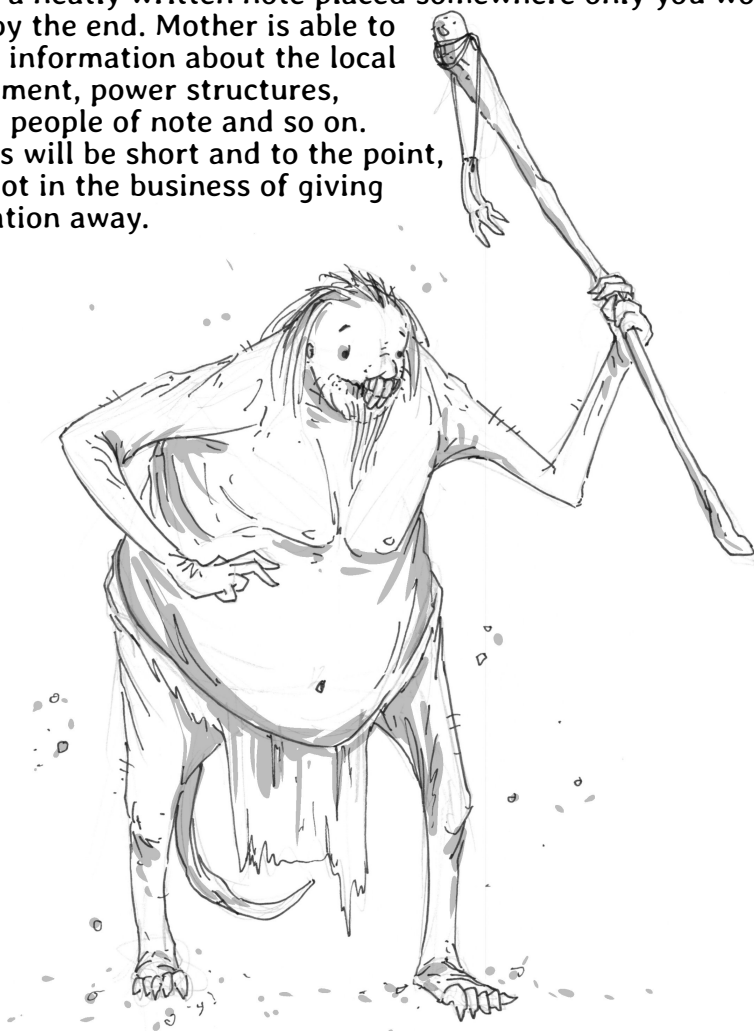
In addition to this they are able to switch between quadruped and biped in their favoured form at will.

Superior Favoured Shape

At 14th level the druids Favoured Shape becomes a greater hybrid, allowing the druid to retain the use of their opposable thumbs, enabling them to use appropriately sized equipment.

Dead Drop

From 14th level the Druid is able to communicate long distances back to Mother. The druid may ask her one question, written and then buried, at the start of a long rest. The answer will arrive in the form of a neatly written note placed somewhere only you would find it by the end. Mother is able to provide information about the local environment, power structures, history, people of note and so on. Answers will be short and to the point, she is not in the business of giving information away.



Mole Rat

Tiny beast, Neutral

Mole rats are 4 inch long subterranean animals who live in colonies of 30 to 300 individuals. They are ruled by the strongest queen, who is able to mentally dominate her people.



Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
12	10	15	2	12	7

Armor Class - 10

Hit Points - 9 (2d4 + 4)

Speed - 20 ft., burrow 10 ft.

Condition Immunities - blinded

Senses - blind-sight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), tremor-sense 60 ft.

Challenge - 1/4 (50 XP)

Claws.

Melee Weapon Attack: reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 2d4 + 1 slashing damage.

Giant Mole Rat

Small beast, Neutral

The 16 inch mole rat lives in identical circumstances to their normal cousins except that they utilise rudimentary wooden supports to maintain the tunnels and chambers of the Queendom

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
14	10	17	2	14	7

Armor Class - 12

Hit Points - 28 (4d6 + 12)

Speed - 20 ft., burrow 10 ft.

Condition Immunities - blinded

Senses - blind-sight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), tremor-sense 60 ft.

Challenge - 1/2 (100 XP)

Claws.

Melee Weapon Attack: reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 2d6 + 2 slashing damage.

Mammoth Mole Rat

Medium beast, Neutral

The giant mole rat is as large as a person and lives deep in the earth where it fills cave systems with soil to house their mazes. Mines and sewers will also serve quite well.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
16	10	19	2	16	7

Armor Class - 14

Hit Points - 68 (8d8 + 32)

Speed - 30 ft., burrow 15 ft.

Condition Immunities - blinded

Senses - blind-sight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), tremor-sense 60 ft.

Challenge - 1 (200 XP)

Claws.

Melee Weapon Attack: reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 2d8 + 3 slashing damage.

Oath of the Hammerer

Dwarfen Paladin Archetype

Hammerers are the embodiment of dwarfen cultural justice. They apprentice for decades to ancient half-blind Hammerer Masters to develop an instinctive understanding of The Law before going out into the world to deliver The Hammer.

Universal Justice

Deliver perfect dwarfen justice to all.

Arm of the Law

Swing your hammer without mercy upon lawbreakers.

Belief in Reform

Those who have received justice are free of their crimes and will not be maligned further.

Symbol of the Hammerer

At 3rd level when the Paladin takes up their oath they're able to Select a single Hammer as their Holy Symbol. They may anoint a different Hammer during a short or long rest if they wish, they may only have one anointed hammer at a time.

Additionally at 3rd level Divine Sense detects chaotic beings as well.

HAMMER'S INCLUDE, LIGHT HAMMERS, WARHAMMERS, AND MAULS FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE OATH

Merciless

Starting at 7th level the Paladin gains Advantage on all Intimidation Checks and Saves vs Fear.

Hammerer's Brand

Beginning at 15th level the Paladin's Hammer which they have anointed as their Holy Symbol counts as having the spell 'Branding Smite' cast on it each time it is picked up by the Paladin

True Justice

At 20th level the Hammerers critical hit range is extended to a natural 19 or 20 instead of just 20. Any 1's or 2's rolled for damage can be rerolled once and the new number must be used. Any dice rolling their highest value may be re-rolled and added to the total; if the new roll is also of highest value you may continue to roll.



Paladin Level

3 rd	Longstrider, Compelled Duel
5 th	Hold Person, Zone of Truth
9 th	Clairvoyance, Binding Smite
13 th	Locate Creature, Freedom of Movement
17 th	Scrying, Banishing Smite

Dungeon Master

Dwarfen Ranger Archetype

The great dwarfen fortresses are famous for their exotic guardian beasts. This can be surprising since they aren't known for their empathy and struggle to get along with animals, sapient or other. However there is an ancient tradition of dwarfs getting lost in the bowls of the earth only to reappear years later naked, filthy and possessing and alarming bestial charisma.

Way of the Beast

From 3rd level when choosing the Dungeon Master Archetype players are able to capture a creature they have encountered before with a challenge rating (CR) of $\frac{1}{2}$ their level or lower as a pet.

It must have an Intelligence of 6 or less and be chosen from the following types. **ABERRATIONS, BEASTS, DEMONS, DRAGONS, ELEMENTALS, FIENDS, GIANTS, MONSTROSITIES, OOZES.**

Monsters can only be commanded to use one actions a turn.

(SEE BEAST MASTER IN THE PHB FOR PET ACTIONS)

Monsters are a challenge to manage and as such require a full action to give a command, if a pet is not commanded it will be up to the DM to decide its action for the turn, it still acts at the same initiative as the ranger, once they have decided their own actions.

WHEN IN CIVILISATION PEOPLE REACT TO YOUR MONSTROUS PETS AS YOU WOULD EXPECT...

Cooperation

At 7th level you may split your main action between yourself and your pet so that you may attack once and they can be commanded for one action.

ADDITIONALLY YOU MAY TAME MONSTERS WITH INTELLIGENCE 7 OR LESS NOW.

Unspoken Bond

Beginning at 11th level you develop a more complete relationship with your pet and are able to communicate non-verbally with your pet as well as not running the risk of ever being the target of it's actions if it is left without a command.

ADDITIONALLY YOU MAY TAME MONSTERS WITH INTELLIGENCE 8 OR LESS NOW.

Monstrosity Master

Starting at 15th level if your pet's CR is less than or equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of your level then it only requires a bonus action to command it. Leaving you with a full action for yourself.

ADDITIONALLY YOU MAY TAME MONSTERS WITH INTELLIGENCE 9 OR LESS NOW.



The Corpse Seller



Born from congealed chaos theory, tied together with string and bits of twine and wrapped in a cloak to keep it all from spilling out, The Corpse Seller lurks in forgotten alleys, where few venture.

The Corpse Seller exists only at night, sleeping away the burning sun in a distant reality, dreaming the lives of his past and future victims. Perhaps he dreams of you.

Everyone he encounters is either a customer or a product. It's up to them, he's open for business either way. From beneath the folds of his cloak he proudly displays an array of corpses, offering an eternally obedient slave. He will extol at length upon the virtues of his wears with a voice akin to a creaking door poorly lubricated with blood, freely answering any questions about the histories of his victims, with gruesome experience and often disturbing detail.

His price is dear, custom tailored to the proclivities of the buyer. He will not haggle. If they value their strength, he will take their best arm. If the lives of their companions are treasured, he deals only in betrayal. If they hold memories of their past sacred, he demands amnesia.

Once a deal is reached, he will reach his arm down his abyssal throat and pull out the soul of the chosen cadaver in a glut of black curling vapor, before shoving it into the mouth of the buyer. The Corpse Seller will collapse in on himself like a spent black hole, leaving only the purchased corpse behind, now reanimated and only slightly the worse for having been dead.

The cadaver will be a blank slate controlled by the buyer, acting as a second body. The cadaver should be treated as undead, and as such doesn't need to eat or sleep. They retain all the abilities they possessed in life, with the exception of any clerical or holy power, and split all future gained XP with the buyer. The cadaver will have its own level, class, STR, DEX, and CON score while it shares the buyer's INT, WIS, and CHA. The cadaver will "die" only when its owner does.

If a deal is not reached or The Corpse Seller is attacked, he will decide that he must expand his stock of corpses.

HD: 1 plus the total levels of the cadavers he is selling
(1d4+1 cadavers of 1d6 levels each).

Saves: As Fighter. AC: As leather.

Attack: An arm that is much too long shoots out and grabs at you. Touch drains one level. Levels are regained only when The Corpse Seller is killed.

The Root

The sea of chaos is ever birthing new horrors. Most are unmade in the same instant, and this is something to be thankful for. The Root was not. It grows throughout, and its tendrils surround those bubbles we call worlds, probing for an entrance. One crack is all it needs to infiltrate. Even if the crack shifts, snips off the tendril, it grows still, each tendril an individual manifestation of the whole.

As this separated element grows, it changes. It seeks a form more suitable to consume the fresh flesh of the reality it has found itself locked into, eventually growing throughout and finding an exit through a hungry, blind search for yet more space, reconnecting to the whole, a node in the Root.

Somewhere, the tendril waits. But what of its form? (Roll d6)

1. A Fungal Colony

A towering colony with its own tendrils spread far from the main colony. The mass of the colony is immense, but worse are the spores. Any carrying the spores are sensitive to the flow of chaos, and thereby magic, within their line of sight. Gazing upon something magical causes a physical reaction, varying in strength by the power of the magic.

d8 Reaction to Magic

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Elation	Pain	Spasms	Arousal	Rage	Depression	Sleep	Ageing

Spell Level - Strength of Reaction

1 Mild. A tiny headache, a slight twitch.

2 Small. The pain of poking an old bruise, involuntary flexing of the fingers.

3 Present. A sharp pain in the stomach, a single arm spasm.

4 Troubling. Pain enough to make you double up. Trying to kick out with both legs.

5 Serious. Nearly blacking out from pain. A small seizure.

6+ Overwhelming. Passing out entirely from pain and feeling it for days after. A full seizure lasting for hours.

This is only the dormant state. Calling the attention of The Root upon yourself awakens the spores fully, and so the transformation begins. Calling the attention of The Root can be either offering yourself to the central mass, or attempting to destroy it. As your lucidity crumbles, and your nerves are replaced (-1 Wisdom and

Dexterity per month) your body is warped into a superior tendril of The Root, gaining +1 Strength and Constitution at the same rate. At 4 Wisdom, you no longer discern between reality and the visions of growth. At 2 Wisdom, a revelation - you learn of the manner in which you could poison The Root. At 0 Wisdom, you are gone utterly. You are one with The Root. You will seek only to spread The Root, defend The Root, and experience everything for The Root. These fully turned servants burn their way across the lands, ranging far from the original colony. A blessing they do not spread the spores.

Animals too can be infested by The Root, but serve only as defenders. Their inability to experience as humans do leaves The Root ignorant of the possibilities.

Poisoning The Root is the only manner of driving it out. All of the servants must be destroyed, bar one. The one surviving servant must be locked in an iron box, and this box inserted into the central mass of The Root. Doing so gives their experience of entrapment primacy over all of sensations, driving The Root to believe itself trapped and stagnant, eventually dying. Those interring this decoy must kill themselves, have breathed the spores and called attention to themselves with the insertion of the iron box. This process takes years.

2. The Tendril

This tendril of the Root somehow knows of its separation, and longs to be one with its parent. It too knows that the best method of achieving this is puncturing the sphere of the world, letting Chaos in, and hoping the Root snakes in too. It can latch on to any spell in the world, forgotten or current. It does not need to be powerful - the smallest crack could be forced open with the brute strength of the Root as a whole. Every time the host spell is cast, there is a tiny chance the crack is open long enough to let it in. (1 in 10,000). This tendril can never die, as long as the spell exists somewhere, whether it is burnt onto a mind or onto a more physical medium. Once the crack is open, the end begins. No need for subtlety, the multihued flesh of the Root grows a mile a day, simply physically filling space. It cannot be stopped once it is in, or at least, no method has been found - although closing the crack and waiting for the Root to adapt once more might be a viable method. It's worth making this a spell the players do not have, and it locked in some horrendous wizard-barrow, encrusted with warnings of the dire consequences of its casting.

3. The Crown of an Empire

The borders of the empire demarcate the extent of the root. Distinguishing such an empire from others is no mean feat, but there are always signs. Strings of rulers seemingly devoid of personality once they don the crown. A lack of internal strife, the placating effect the Root gives to those under its sway. Revisionist historians, letting the Root grow both spatially and temporally, stretching itself through the tapestry of time, and ensuring it can never truly die, not whilst a flicker of the empire remains. The citizens of these empires are bound utterly with the fate of the Root, and will see it spread far and wide.

d6 The Nature of The Empire

1. Benevolence for all. Won't you join us happy folk? See how our people live. How could you not join us?
2. Savagery for the outsider. All barbarians will be destroyed utterly.
3. Infectious culture. Our arts elevate us, something for you to study and grasp at the perfection of.
4. Nomadic hordes, pouring forth to subjugate the landed fools.
5. Insidious assimilators. Together, we can reign over all, hand in hand, an alliance unstoppable.
6. Mercantile. Gold is the blood of nations - and our blood runs thickest.

d6 The Size of the Empire, current or Past.

1. A speck. A peasant proclaiming himself king of his fields.
2. A town declaring independence.
3. An alliance of towns agreeing upon a single leader.
4. An established local power.
5. A super power.
6. A colossus astride the world.

Barring the pacifying effect of the Root, it is much the same as any other empire. It can only be killed through utter erasure. Every castle torn down. Every book merely mentioning them burnt. Every village massacred. Every single person with a shred of allegiance hung. Even the despoilers of this empire must die before the infestation is driven out. Better to live ignorant.



4. The Root is Faith

Not faith in the Root itself - something so alien and hostile would never have the qualities desired, and would imply knowledge of itself. The Root will latch onto a disparate and confused set of beliefs and set about fusing them into a faith, a priesthood, one bent on missionary work and conversion. It works through empires and good folk, turns the faithful into carriers and so sets itself to spreading. Perhaps an advantage to this Root Religion is the blessings it can bestow - it is no distant god, or tool of the elites, but a dumb, hungry presence which has learnt how best to spread itself. The Root knows too that the unconverted can be coaxed into the fold by fear. Those attempting to defile the grounds of the Root are cursed, struck by the power and the fury.

Heresies and unorthodoxies only strengthen the Root religion, each another element of the whole, yet complete in itself - but theology unravels it. The contrivances and coincidences mount up as scholars dig deeper and deeper into the parasitic heart of the church, eventually reaching the conclusion that despite the miracles - there is nothing there. It simply isn't. And with this realisation, the Root perishes utterly, all blessings rescinded.

5. The Maw

The Root is not always subtle. In this form it is simply a horrendous maw, devouring the world and excreting nothing - everything is used to fuel its terrible growth. Reality itself is what it eats, leaving utter frigid Nothing behind. It cannot be starved unless ejected from reality itself. It can also be killed with force of arms, but this is no mean feat - even as weapons cut its flesh, they are consumed and destroyed utterly. Magic weapons can be used twice - the first strike devouring the magic, the second the physical tool.

THE MOUTH

HD 14

AC 12

ATTACKS -

EAT REALITY - SAVE VS PARALYSIS OR BE OBLITERATED, UTTERLY. 20FT AREA CONSUMED EACH TIME. IT ALWAYS ATTACKS.

MORALE 12

MOVE AS WALKING MAN

Whenever damage is dealt, an equal number of dice one size smaller is healed. So, if d8 damage is dealt, d6 damage is healed. The weapon is always destroyed utterly.

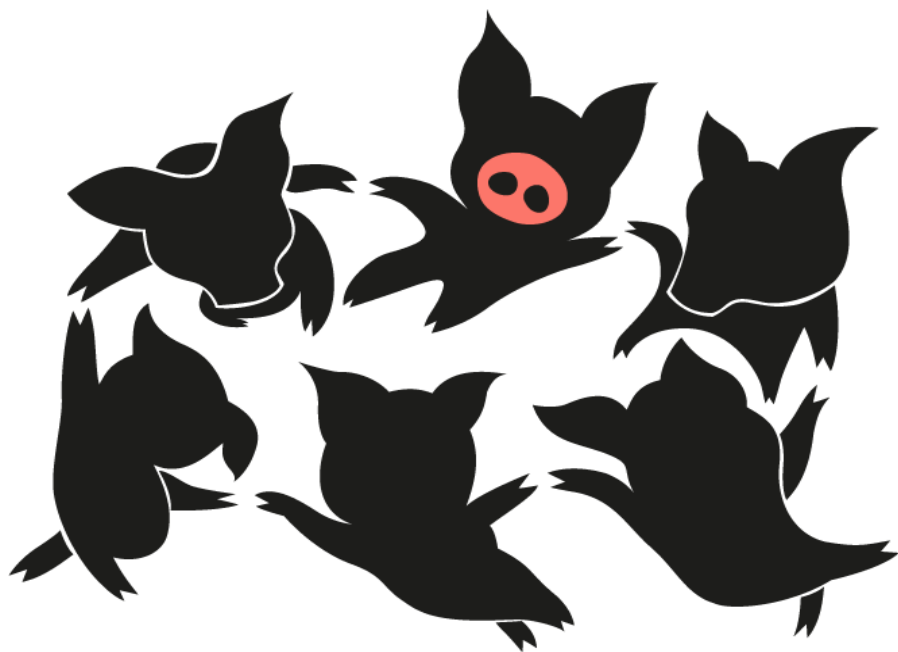
d10 Blessings & Curses of the Root

Blessings	Curses
1 Healing. The faithful are healed at the central points, the temples or holy grounds. Those professing faith are cured of disease and ailment, even stitching together rent flesh. All the better to proselytise.	Maiming. Eyes struck blind, ears deafened, limbs mangled and diseases sown. The converted, of course, could be cured...
2 Fertility. The faithful are rewarded with great fertility, their families huge and the fields bountiful, feeding the many thankful mouths under its dominion.	Death stalks this heathen. From their loins no children shall grow, nor shall their crops give bounty, nor shall animals give birth in their care.
3 Visions. The priests of the Root are invested with clairvoyance into matters impossible to know - if they fall within the realms of the faithful. Where ever the books or stories are carried, the Root is with them, and so it knows.	Destruction of Remembrance. The afflicted cannot commit anything new to memory, forever lost and without guide - where am I? Why? For how long?
4 Euphoria. The faithful know no pain or suffering within their holy places, elated with the divine presence moving through them. (+1 to everything from confidence)	Dread. The heathen shall know what they are before the divine, and feel the impending judgement before it arrives. (-1 to everything from assumed failure)
5 Tranquillity. Blessed with peace of mind, and a life of peace. (The second one being a perceptual trick of the first).	Rage. The heathens shall know only violence and horror. During combat, the cursed can only wade in with their melee weapons, doing +1 damage but ignoring their dexterity bonus to AC. After all enemies are slain, they must continue fighting for d4 more rounds, starting with the nearest allies. They cannot ignore a challenge to combat.
6 Wealth. Every business venture of the blessed shall return greatly, every investment shall be wise. The peasants dressed as nobles, and the nobles greater still.	Destitution. The non-believer shall be cursed, wealth forever escaping their grasp. Every week, the cursed loses 10% of their wealth through mysterious means. Their investments never pay off. All prices are doubled, merchants somehow knowing.



6. The Mind of a Willing Host

The Root found an ideal host, and made itself useful to them. Spoken and written words, so easily spread, written down, spoken aloud with your infected mind, mouth and hands. Something essential. Thankfully, perhaps, it pirated the concept. Not all languages are of the Root, but one group is. It could be yours, or one across an ocean, far far away, waiting for the ships to come and carry it far. The language of the Root is beautiful, always, but full of duplicity and lies. It is pure, rejecting loanwords and assimilation, for it somehow knows of its one weakness - diluted too much, and spread too thin, it can never take hold. Often bound to the fate of its host people, but without the obvious influence of the form of Empire. It is more subtle - as language shapes thought, so the Root will shape its linguistic hosts. The people and the culture hosting this parasite are mystics, and this grants them power over others. They are sensitive to things others cannot imagine, but ponder about. Shamans, priests and alchemists are common speakers of the tongue. This delicate and subtle flowering of the Root can be stamped out by force of arms, the utter annihilation of the speakers, or through the blending of cultures and thereby languages.



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