



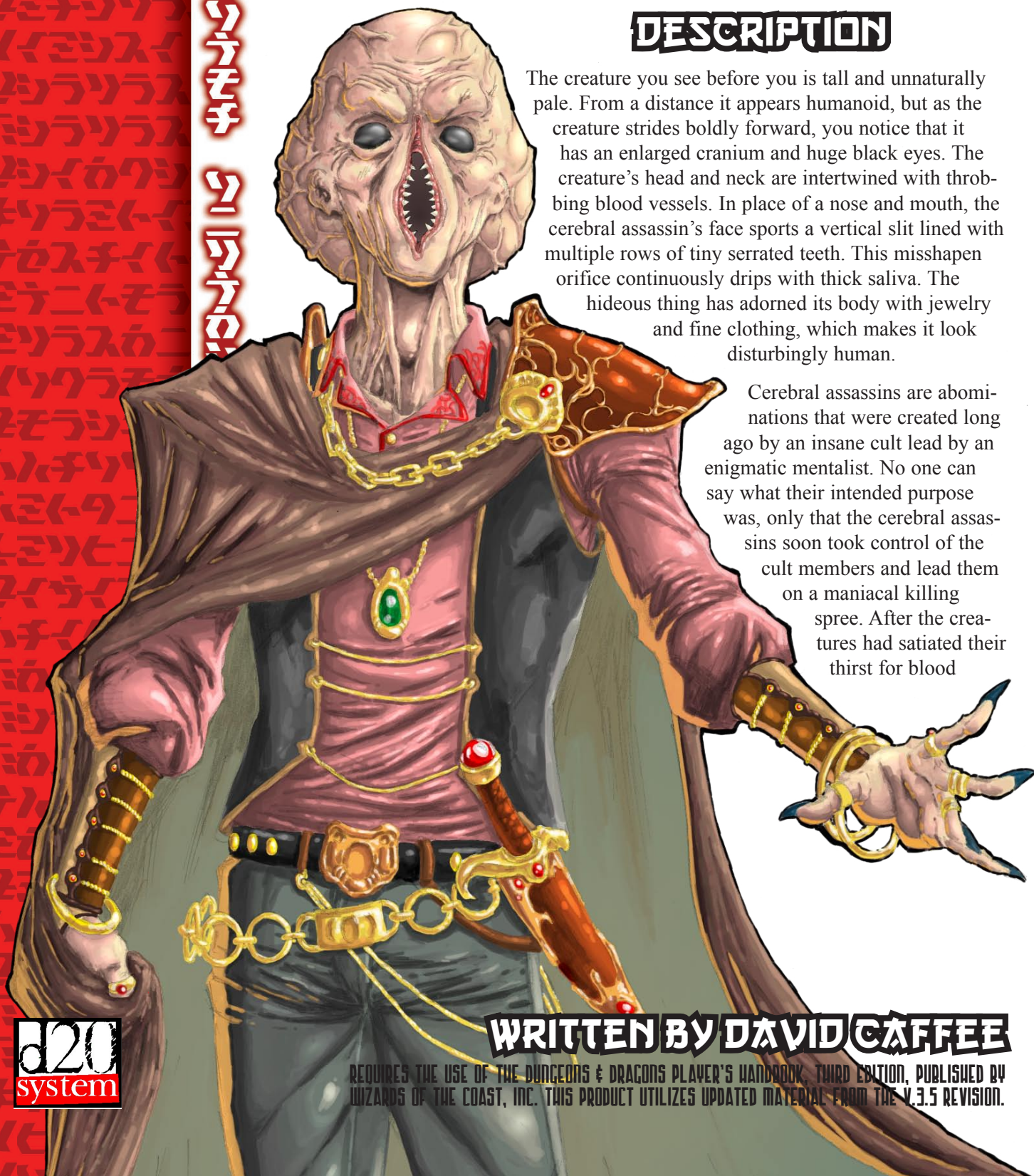
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MONSTERS OF NEOXODUS: CEREBRAL ASSASSIN

DESCRIPTION

The creature you see before you is tall and unnaturally pale. From a distance it appears humanoid, but as the creature strides boldly forward, you notice that it has an enlarged cranium and huge black eyes. The creature's head and neck are intertwined with throbbing blood vessels. In place of a nose and mouth, the cerebral assassin's face sports a vertical slit lined with multiple rows of tiny serrated teeth. This misshapen orifice continuously drips with thick saliva. The hideous thing has adorned its body with jewelry and fine clothing, which makes it look disturbingly human.

Cerebral assassins are abominations that were created long ago by an insane cult lead by an enigmatic mentalist. No one can say what their intended purpose was, only that the cerebral assassins soon took control of the cult members and lead them on a maniacal killing spree. After the creatures had satiated their thirst for blood



WRITTEN BY DAVID CAFFEE



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CEREBRAL ASSASSIN-CRB

they disposed of their puppets and went their separate ways. Somehow the aberrations have figured out a way to create copies of themselves and procreate. Since it is widely believed that the first cerebral assassins were humanoids, it follows that the creatures are simply recreating the process that spawned them.

These creatures are usually found in the service of people in positions of power. Most cerebral assassins work for profit but also enjoy using their “legitimate” employment as an outlet for their sadistic tendencies. Power is an unbearable temptation for a cerebral assassin and they never miss an opportunity to usurp power from their masters. Cerebral assassins are both intelligent and extremely manipulative and their psionic abilities allow them to gain influence over those around them. These creatures are cunning and patient and they are more than willing to serve others in the short term if doing so allows them to gain a long term advantage.

These twisted creatures love treasure and jewelry almost as much as they love inflicting pain. A cerebral assassin never passes up an opportunity to steal something gaudy and valuable. They typically dress in the finest clothing available and put on as many rings, bracelets, medallions and necklaces and they can. A cerebral assassin does not work cheap and they prefer a long contract to a single patron over individual assignments.

Cerebral assassins are incapable of controlling their murderous impulses and if they cannot find a better way to satisfy their lust for cruelty and pain then they will resort to random violence. The less experienced members of this race are particularly vulnerable to this horrible appetite for torture and death. A cerebral assassin may disguise itself with a hooded cloak and attempt to infiltrate a crowd, using its terrifying mental abilities to shatter the brains of those nearby. The creature runs in seeming panic with the rest of the crowd as it continues to target bystanders and cause their heads to explode. Other times, a cerebral assassin on a rampage acts through others, telepathically compelling others to do its work for it while it watches from a distance.

Cerebral assassins cannot speak any known language as their mouths are ill suited for the task. They communicate telepathically with each other and can converse with other creatures as well, though they loathe to do so.

LE Medium-size Aberration

Init: +6 Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages: None, cerebral assassins are incapable of speech.

AC: 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 *Dex*, +3 *natural armor*, +1 *shield*)

hp: 44 (8 *HD*)

Resistance: Spell Resistance 25

Save: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +9

Speed: 30 ft. (6 *squares*)

Melee: +8/+3 bite (2d4+1)

Melee: +7/+2 heavy mace (1d8+1)

Ranged: +8 heavy crossbow (1d10)

Space: 5 ft; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk: +6; Grp +7

Psionic Abilities (ML 8)

2nd (DC 16, at will) — levitate, psionic (1 hour, 20 minutes), suggestion, psionic (8 hours)

1st (DC 15, at will) — burst (1 round), charm, psionic (8 hours), conceal thoughts (8 hours), detect psionics (8 minutes)

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 17, Cha 17

Feats: Alertness, Combat Manifestation, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Finesse (*bite*).

Skills: Bluff +8, Concentration +12 (+16 *casting defensively*), Hide +8, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (*arcana*) +11, Knowledge (*history*) +9, Knowledge (*local*) +11, Listen +12, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12, Swim +6.

Possessions: heavy mace, heavy crossbow, masterwork buckler, noble’s outfit, signet ring, 400 gp.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A cerebral assassin can avoid the effects of spells and spell-like abilities that directly affect it. In order to overcome the cerebral assassin’s spell resistance, the caster must make a caster level check (1d20 + *caster level*) against a DC of 25. The spell works normally on a successful check, although the cerebral assassin is still allowed a saving throw.

Mind Static (Sp): Any creature within a 30 foot radius of a cerebral assassin is assailed by a haze of random thoughts that are blasted straight into the creature’s mind. Those rare few who have survived a

run in with a cerebral assassin describe this effect as hearing voices scream at you in a dozen languages. Anyone within range of this ability suffers a -2 penalty to their Intelligence score. Anyone attempting to make a Concentration check inside the mind static field suffers a -4 penalty to their roll. Psionic characters lose 1 power point for every round that they stay inside the affected area. Activating or deactivating the field of mind static is a free action. This is a mind-influencing effect.

Brain Burst: Once every four rounds a cerebral assassin can use this ability to target a single creature that is being affected by its mind static ability. The targeted creature must make a Will saving throw (*DC 22*) or its head will explode, killing the creature instantly. Using this ability is a full round action. Creatures that are immune to mind-affecting effects, stunning, paralysis or death effects are likewise immune to this effect. Any creature without an Intelligence score is immune to this effect.

Improved Grab: If a Cerebral Assassin hits with a bite attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. No initial touch attack is required. A cerebral assassin can use its improved grab ability on any creature that is medium-size or smaller. A cerebral assassin deals bite damage to a grappled opponent for each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds.

Telepathy (Su): A cerebral assassin can communicate telepathically with any other creature within 100 feet that has a language.

The creature before you approaches confidently. Its lifeless black eyes stare down at you as massive blood vessels in its head and neck pulsate in time. Your head begins aching as the creature take aim its crossbow.

COMBAT

In combat a cerebral assassin always targets enemy spellcasters and psionics first. The creatures' unexplained hatred of sorcerers and wizards drives them to attack these foes relentlessly. They are clever adversaries who often set traps and attack their enemies from a distance. The cerebral assassin becomes truly dangerous when it closes in on an opponent and activates its mind static special ability. A cerebral assassin often takes the full defense action while waiting for the opportunity to use its brain burst ability.

CEREBRAL ASSASSIN CHARACTERS

Cerebral Assassins tend to train as psions or psychic warriors in order to take maximum advantage of their impressive mental abilities. Many of them also take levels as rogues. Cerebral Assassins disdain spellcasters and almost never enter into a class that grants a character the ability to cast arcane or divine spells.

A cerebral assassin's favored class is psion. Most of the more experienced cerebral assassins are psychic warriors or rogue/psions.

CEREBRAL ASSASSIN PARAGON CR11

Cerebral Assassin Paragon 3

LE Medium-size Aberration

Init: +7 Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +15

Languages: None, cerebral assassins are incapable of speech.

AC: 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 *Dex*, +3 *natural armor*, +1 *shield*)

hp: 61 (11 *HD*)

Resistance: Spell Resistance 30

Save: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +12

Speed: 30 ft. (6 *squares*)

Melee: +12/+7 bite (2d4+2)

Melee: +11/+6 heavy mace (1d8+2)

Ranged: +11 heavy crossbow (1d10)

Space: 5 ft; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk: +7; Grp +9

Psionic Abilities (ML 11)

3rd (DC 17, at will) — body adjustment (*heals 1d12 damage*), mind trap.

2nd (DC 16, at will) — levitate, psionic (1 hour; 50 minutes), suggestion, psionic (11 hours)

1st (DC 15, at will) — burst (1 round), charm, psionic (11 hours), conceal thoughts (11 hours), detect psionics (11 minutes)

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 18

Feats: Alertness, Combat Manifestation, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Finesse (*bite*), Weapon Focus (*bite*).

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Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +14 (+18 *casting defensively*), Hide +11, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (*arcana*) +14, Knowledge (*history*) +12, Knowledge (*local*) +14, Listen +1, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +9, Spot +15, Swim +7.

Possessions: masterwork heavy mace, heavy crossbow, masterwork buckler, 20 masterwork crossbow bolts, signet ring, royal outfit, 800 gp.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A cerebral assassin paragon can avoid the effects of spells and spell-like abilities that directly affect it. In order to overcome the paragon's spell resistance, the caster must make a caster level check ($1d20 + \text{caster level}$) against a DC of 30. The spell works normally on a successful check, although the cerebral assassin paragon is still allowed a saving throw.

Mind Static (Sp): Any creature within a 30 foot radius of a cerebral assassin paragon is assailed by a haze of random thoughts that are blasted straight into the creature's mind. Those rare few who have survived a run in with a cerebral assassin describe this effect as hearing voices scream at you in a dozen languages. Anyone within range of this ability takes 2 points of temporary Intelligence damage. Anyone attempting to make a Concentration check inside the mind static field suffers a -4 penalty to their check. Psionic characters lose 1 power point for every round that they stay inside the affected area. Activating or deactivating the field of mind static is a free action. This is a mind-influencing effect.

Brain Burst (Sp): Once every four rounds a cerebral assassin paragon can use this ability to target a single creature that is being affected by its mind static ability. The targeted creature must make a Will saving throw ($DC\ 26$) or its head will explode. The creature dies instantly. Using this ability is a full round action. Creatures that are immune to mind-affecting effects, stunning, paralysis or death effects are likewise immune to this effect. Any creature without an Intelligence score is immune to this effect.

Find Target (Sp): When attempting to find an item or a creature, a cerebral assassin does so without error, as though guided by discern location.

The cerebral assassin must have seen (*or must have an item belonging to*) the creature to be found, or must have touched the object to be located. This ability is the equivalent of an 8th-level spell.

Improved Grab: If a cerebral assassin paragon hits with a bite attack, it deals normal damage and

attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. No initial touch attack is required. A cerebral assassin paragon can use its improved grab ability on any creature that is medium-size or smaller. A cerebral assassin paragon deals bite damage to a grappled opponent for each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds.

Telepathy (Su): A cerebral assassin paragon can communicate telepathically with any other creature within 100 feet that has a language.

You see a tall, pale humanoid standing in the distant shadows. As it steps into the light you see the sparkle of gems and jewelry hanging around its grotesque neck. It approaches slowly and confidently, completely unafraid. With a simple gesture it signals its allies to attack.

Cerebral assassin paragons are the epitome of megalomania and sadistic tyranny. They seek to dominate or destroy anything within their sight. They are almost always found in the employment of powerful military leaders, wealthy businessmen, or political and religious figures. They serve power so that they may get close to it and become the power behind the throne. These creatures are far less likely to go on random killing sprees than less experienced members of their race. It is not that the paragon is less sadistic or vicious, far from it. The cerebral assassin paragon is simply too preoccupied with the violence acts it commits in the name of treasure or ambition. These creatures have been known to take captives that they keep in their lairs as pets or worse.

COMBAT

The cerebral assassin paragon is usually a bit more cautious when entering combat. These experienced killers take their time when stalking a target. They often set up elaborate ambushes, using their suggestion ability to form alliances with other creatures who then provide cannon fodder. Paragons will also seek to find people that their target(s) trust or admire, coercing these bystanders into becoming unknowing accomplices or bait.

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