



Monster of the Week

Barang Beetles

A NEW MONSTER FOR USE WITH THE PATHFINDER® ROLEPLAYING GAME

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The Monster of the Week

The Monster of the Week product line takes its inspiration from the television trope of the same name: a convention by which a weekly television production might introduce a new freak, villain, or beastie in every episode, allowing the episode's themes and topics to revolve around the latest "big bad." Monster of the Week aims to arm GMs with creatures and villains perfect for such a role. Whether you're looking to populate a memorable encounter or a villainous story arc, our Monster of the Week is made for maximum creep-factor and memorable "wow" power!

Within this installment's pages you will find the true and terrible description of the barang beetle swarm – a mass of bewitched vermin who crave to nest and lair inside of living flesh. Taken from real-life Visayan mythology and superstition, barang describes a kind of witchcraft by which evil spirits are bid to dwell within familiar vessels – typically beetles, specially prepared and cared for by a mambabarang: a practitioner of the dark arts. To that end, you will find more than baleful beetles below. Included here are insidious spells for a mambabarang villain of your own to cast (perhaps an alchemist, occultist, or witch). But be warned: dabbling in these abandoned arts is sure to take its toll...

Barang Beetles

A mass of grotesque insects, each one fully the length of a man's thumb, scrape and scabble forward like a carpet of glistening black shells and knobby stick-legs.

BARANG BEETLES

CR 3

XP 800; NE Diminutive vermin (swarm)

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 20, flat-footed 19 (+2 Dex, +1 natural, +8 size)

hp 38 (7d8+7)

Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2

Defensive Abilities swarm traits; **Immune** mind-affecting effects, weapon damage

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., climb 15 ft.

Melee swarm (2d6 plus insidious infestation)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks insidious infestation, simulated telepathy

STATISTICS

Str 1 Dex 14, Con 13, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 8

Base Attack +5; **CMB** –; **CMD** –

Skills Climb +3, Perception +8; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or warm deserts, forests, or plains

Organization solitary, pair, or bank (3-30)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Insidious Infestation (Ex) When a barang beetle swarm deals damage to a living creature, that creature becomes infested by a number of beetles equal to the amount of damage received. These creatures burrow into existing openings in the victim's flesh, such as the nose, mouth, ears, or even open wounds. To make matters worse, barang beetles immediately and instinctively set to work inducing a disquieting alchemical reaction within the body: one minute after a living creature is infested, it is rendered unconscious for 1d3 rounds unless it can succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude saving throw. The creature must repeat this saving throw each round for ten rounds in order to stave off the unconsciousness entirely. The saving throw is Constitution-based.

When a creature rendered unconscious in this way awakens, it is immediately subject to an effect similar to a *modify memory* spell (no save) which erases the last 6d10 minutes from its mind, including the infestation.

Simulated Telepathy (Su) Barang beetles share a sort of "hive mind" with one another – not an uncommon trait among certain types of vermin. What makes the barang hive mind unique is its similarity to a living brain, thanks to certain alchemical, electrical properties inherent to the vermin. This property allows beetles infesting a host to share that host's senses. Furthermore, as long as even one beetle infests a host, they can override the creature's thoughts as a



suggestion spell (DC 20 + 1 per infesting beetle). Barang beetles do not use this ability except to take an action that it perceives as crucial to the survival of the host. The beetles also shield the host's mind as a *nondetection* spell (CL 7).

Rumors persist of a desperate tyrant whose kingdom came under attack by enemy forces. Though the lord's militia was sufficient to secure his northern borders, forces marched upon the men stationed at his southern boundaries, who were rapidly losing ground. The cruel dictator conscripted a set of his citizens – the peace-loving monks of a humble monastery near the kingdom's southern border – but the monks refused to take up arms for the despot. The tyrant turned to his vizier and alchemist, who promised the despot a

solution: the power to control innumerable swarms of parasitic vermin, each of which possessed the ability to influence the actions of a host. Placing a wealth of resources in the evil alchemist's hands, the autocratic lord received his wish: the alchemist's beetles were set loose on monastery grounds, and monks fought and died under the tyrant's banner after all. The lord's infected legion became a feared fighting force, and the subject of numerable myths and rumors.

CURING A BARANG INFESTATION

A *remove disease* spell cast on an infested target destroys 1d6 infesting beetles, and deals an equal amount of damage to the host as the infesting parasites' death throes cause internal damage to the host. A *heal* spell completely destroys all infesting beetles without doing harm to the host. The death of a host also always results in the destruction of any and all infesting beetles.

MAMBABARANG MAGIC

The following spells interact with barang beetles and infested hosts in ways designed to add an extra layer of versatility to the way a GM uses barang beetle swarms in his or her campaign. Characters that practice so-called barang magic are often called mambabarang, and are typically regarded with mistrust and suspicion, owing to the insidious natures of the spells described here. Practitioners, by necessity, learn to raise and care for swarms of barang beetles, employing them in their arts.

Barang Binding

School enchantment (charm) [mind-affecting];
Level alchemist 2, druid 3, occultist 3, shaman 3, witch 3

Casting Time 1 hour

Components V, S, M (bamboo shavings, ginger root, and alchemical powders worth 100 gp)

Range personal

Target you

Duration 1 day/level

DESCRIPTION

You can eavesdrop upon the simulated telepathic network that comprises a barang beetle swarm's "hive mind," and even influence it. For the duration of the spell, you can influence the actions of a beetle swarm within 120 ft. as though the swarm were *dominated* and under your control, provided that you spend a full-round action each round to do so. If you do not spend a full-round action on any given round, the swarm will resume acting as instinct dictates.

Additionally, you can automatically detect barang-infested creatures at a range of 120 ft. This detection ability works similarly to the *lifesense* special quality. Furthermore, you can influence infected hosts by exercising control of the infesting beetles' simulated telepathy special attack, determining which actions the beetles "suggest" using their *suggestion* ability.

Doing so is a full-round action.

Finally, barang beetles will not attack you of their own volition while you are under the effects of this spell.

Mandate of the Mambabarang

School enchantment (charm) [mind-affecting];
Level alchemist 6, druid 7, occultist 6, shaman 7, witch 7

Casting Time 1 hour

Components V, S, M (bamboo shavings, ginger root, and alchemical powders worth 1,000 gp)

Range personal

Target you

Duration 1 day/level

DESCRIPTION

This spell is similar to the *barang binding* spell, except that you may influence infected Humanoid hosts as *dominate person*, allowing for long-term control of multiple infected persons. The save DC for this effect is equal to that of the infesting beetles' *simulated telepathy* ability. This control is broken should the host be cured of its barang infection.

Nabarang

School necromancy [curse]; **Level** druid 1, occultist 1, shaman 1, witch 1

Casting Time 1 full-round action

Components V, S, M (a powdered barang beetle husk)

Range touch

Target one living creature

Duration 1 day/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes

DESCRIPTION

Barang beetles feel drawn to the target, preferring it to other potential hosts. Barang beetle swarms that can see a creature affected by this curse will prioritize it, attacking and infesting it in preference to other living hosts that it can see. If a swarm loses line of sight to the affected creature, it will not pursue or search for your victim as long as other potential hosts are nearby.

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