

Monsters of Aquilae

Bloodguise Diredamsel



A Fantasy Roleplaying Supplement
by J. Evans Payne



Colophon

Author

J. Evans Payne

Monster & Character Art

Karen Martin, Jack Kaiser

Cover Scene Art

Jack Kaiser

Iconography

J. Payne

Design & Concept

Jason Payne

Developer

Jason E. Payne

Producer

Jason Evans Payne

Editor

J. E. Payne

Layout and Graphic Design

Jason E. P.

Cover Art and Logos

Enyap Nosaj

Cartography

J. Evans Payne

Typesetting

J. Snavely Enyap

Proofreading

Beattin A. Dedhaurs

Indexing

Adobe InDesign

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Thank you for believing in me, when all I had to prove myself was an idea, a blurb, a handful of maps, and a dream.

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- Please do not add my name to the credits
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Creative Director

J. Evans Payne

Lead Editor

J. Evans Payne

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J. Evans Payne

CFO

J. Evans Payne

Artistic Director

J. Evans Payne

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About Infinium Game Studio

Founded in 2015, **Infinium Game Studio (IGS)** came about as the result of a simple mission: Make shared storytelling games easier and more fun for both players and referees alike.

Our vision is that **Infinium Game Studio** empowers referees, players, and the industry entire with innovative gaming tools; high-quality, deeply-designed products; and creative takes on established paradigms.

Values and Key Differences

Plays Well With Everyone

IGS products are engineered to be usable by both novice and veteran gaming groups. As a result, they must contain everything a novice GM might need to react quickly to his/her play group.

Comprehensive and Immersive

Each **IGS** product should “feel real” and come with everything the referee might require to make the setting, context, environment, or other content come alive.

Everything You Need

The ideal adventure should contain practically everything you need to run the game, except the core rulebook. Even the most skilled GM wastes time looking things up in multiple books. It's so exceedingly rare that an adventure contain all of the crunch and fluff necessary to run it.

Maps: Where Are We, Again?

A picture is worth a thousand words... and also, a thousand seconds of prep time. Visually appealing, easy-to-use, and extensive Maps are an essential part of any shared-storytelling experience.

Pervasive Maps

Don't put a building on a map if I can't go inside it.

Prepared for Anything

In a gaming session, a good referee must be prepared for the PCs to explore any aspect of the content. All too often, an otherwise outstanding adventure will fail to provide for a major percentage of its content. If there are twenty buildings in a town, but maps for only two of them--well, it's fairly apparent where the Big Bad is going to be holed up! Not every map will be riddled with secret passages, custom random encounters, and combat, but there should be something of interest in every building. Otherwise, it shouldn't be there!

Thoroughness: But What If...?

It's possible to have a 16-page adventure that's wonderful and exciting. It's also possible to have a 255-page sourcebook be boring and repetitive. Striking the right balance between over-padding and under-describing is challenging, but an important part of what we do at **IGS**.

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Each product should be usable on its own, completely out of context; as a start to a completely new campaign; as part of the “intended” Adventure Path or associated suite of **IGS** products; or to insert into an existing ongoing campaign.

Reusable

No **IGS** product is “one and done” by design.

FlexTale and Comprehensive Design enable this flexibility and reusability.

Production Quality

Our goal is to produce world-class products with high production values.

Introduction

Additional Reference

This document is intended as a sample of the much larger, and comprehensive, *Monsters of Aquilae* work.

As a result, it contains pared-down descriptions of many of the core philosophies and approaches to tabletop RPG playing that **Infinium Game Studios** products employ.

If you are looking for additional detail around these topics, please refer to the free PDF offerings available on DriveThruRPG.

These will discuss Reward Stars, FlexAI, and other topics in greater detail.


Crunch and Fluff

“**Crunch**” is a term commonly used to refer to the dozens of statistics that describe a creature from the standpoint of raw game mechanics. Although there is a great deal of flexibility in these stat blocks being used to convey flavor, demeanor, behavior, and personality, such “softer” yet still important game elements are often referred to as “**fluff**”.

Each GM and player has their own relationship to these game elements, and preferences as to their balance in gameplay. Some groups live by crunch, and largely ignore fluff; adventures tend to be little more than an organized dungeon crawl, and min/maxing your PC’s character options and equipment is commonplace. Other groups focus solely on storytelling, and use game mechanics only when it’s necessary to introduce a bit of randomness to the proceedings.

You can have a great deal of fun at either end of the spectrum, or anywhere in between!

Quadded Stat Blocks and Default Language

Any of a creature’s **fluff** uses language assuming that you are playing the  **Low** level of difficulty version of that creature. For example, the **Low** level of an NPC might wield a run-of-the-mill rapier, and the **Elite** version might instead use a +3 *corrosive burst rapier*; the descriptions that accompany that NPC would refer merely to her rapier as the default equipment. Similarly, any illustrations drawn will typically use imagery associated with **Low**-challenge gear and items.

Header

The **header** is simply the name of the monster. NPCs have a name, and also parenthetically their position, job title, profession, or how they are best known.

It’s worth noting that not every monster and NPC is meant to be defeated in combat... in fact, the GM is encouraged to award **XP** only for combat that is consistent with the

alignment and characters of the PCs, or if they are forced into combat by circumstances beyond their control. A Lawful Good Paladin, for example, should not reap XP for conducting a baseless murder spree of first-level townsfolk.

Description

A brief description of the physical appearance of the creature.

Auras

Many creatures exude a palpable aura of dread, fear, or other condition or effect. The description, and game mechanics for the effect, are discussed here, if applicable.

Encounter Behavior

Although FlexAI rules grant a great deal of flavor and capability to simulating monster combat behavior, additional details and description are provided here, including any non-combat behavior of note.

Targeting

Many creatures employ explicit Targeting; that is, they fixate on a single or explicit handful of creatures as their combat adversaries using certain conditions, requirement, or preferences. If this applies to a creature, it will be discussed here.

Story Hooks

This section contains quest snippets or introductory story elements can be used to insert this creature into any existing plot or campaign setting.

Actions & Special Qualities

Specific combat and non-combat actions and characteristics are described here.

Quadded Stat Blocks

Note that unless otherwise specified, bonuses and penalties from all sources should be included already in the figures provided. For example, the **Attacks** section should reflect ability score modifiers, skill and feat modifiers, special ability / special quality modifiers, and modifiers derived from the enhancement bonuses of the weapon itself.


The **exception** to this is effects coming from magical weapons: for example, a *corrosive light crossbow* might show as dealing **1d8** damage. This value does not, however, include the *corrosive* effect, which normally causes the weapon to deal an additional **1d6** points of acid damage when the effect is activated.

Also of note is the **Prepared Spells** section. For NPCs with class levels of a spellcasting class that must prepare spells in advance, this section reflects a suggested pool of spells that have been memorized or that are otherwise ready to cast. The GM is of course encouraged to modify the list as she desires to fit the circumstances of gameplay; for example, if the party starts attacking townsfolk willy-nilly, then spellcasters in town might be more likely to ready defensive and combat spells.

Finally, the **Treasure** section in the stat blocks lists the equipment normally carried or used by the creature. Gold, jewels, and non-combat items that do not have an impact on game mechanics and crunch are not listed here.

Special Abilities

All **special abilities**, auras, **special qualities**, and other remarkable effects that apply to the creature are described here, in alphabetical order.

Note that this section lists a **complete set** of possible special abilities that apply to the creature taken from its  **Elite** stat block. Individual stat blocks above this section will list out which special abilities / SQs apply to the creature in its various forms of CR.

With this, and the **Feats** section afterward, there is considerable duplication—many NPCs have **Low-Light Vision**, for example. This is **by design**, and speaks to a common complaint among GMs: bestiaries and NPC listings are great for getting the vital details, but it's often hard to remember just exactly what the **Power Attack** feat means.

The intent with the **Infinium Game Studios** approach to NPC and monster definitions is to make it as easy as possible to play a given creature, without having to refer to multiple other rulebooks. GMs dancing among tomes, trying to cross-reference dozens of characteristics to figure out what the creature does next is unsatisfying, wasteful of time, and takes everyone in the game out of immersion—“hold on, let me remind myself what an Alchemist's **Explosive Bombs** are like” doesn't exactly keep players on the edge of their seats!

Feats

All **feats** taken by the creature in its class level progression are listed here, in alphabetical order. As with the **Special Abilities** section, the list here is a superset of everything that applies to the **Elite** version of the creature; specific feats taken at lower-challenge iterations are listed in the **Feats** section of the quadded stat block.

Treasure

If the creature carries wealth, jewels, or valuables beyond their equipment listed earlier, such booty is described here. Creatures whose only possessions are arms and armor might not have this section at all.

Rarity

The FlexTale Encounter Generator goes into elaborate and fully-scaled detail for every monster, in every terrain context.

As a result, the Bestiary itself merely lists a quick shorthand as to rarity, using the simple nomenclature of “Common”, “Uncommon”, and “Rare”.

Occurrences

Each monster lists whether it is encountered on its own, or in a group. This is useful for monsters that might otherwise seem “squishy”; simply include more than just the one to up the threat level.

Challenge Rating

The short version here is that CRs are not slavishly stringent in *Aquilae: Bestiary of the Realm*. It would be nearly impossible to create CR-compliant listings for each monster.

Instead, CRs listed herein reflect the Hit Dice of the creatures and statblocks involved. In many cases, this means that the CR listed is likely higher than you might expect, particularly for “squishy” monsters who were “evolved” from lower-CR origins.

In these scenarios, recall that the FlexTale approach, and the intent behind this Bestiary, is to present appropriate challenges for parties of varying levels, not perfect threats for exact levels.

Common Creature Features

Some Special Abilities and Feats are so pervasive, it was neither possible nor feasible to include a complete description each time the feature came up in monster descriptions.

Below please find a consolidated listing of these abilities. Where applicable, these appear in the monster's stat block, commonly under the Special Abilities or Feats sections; the complete description is simply not included in the latter text of those monsters.

Darkvision (Ex) Range 60 ft.; Darkvision is the extraordinary ability to see with no light source at all, out to a range specified for the creature. Darkvision is black and white only (colors cannot be discerned). It does not allow characters to see anything that they could not see otherwise—invisible objects are still invisible, and illusions are still visible as what they seem to be. Likewise, darkvision subjects a creature to gaze attacks normally. The presence of light does not spoil darkvision.

Improved Natural Attack (X) Attacks made by one natural weapon leaves vicious wounds. Choose one of the creature's natural attack forms. The damage for this natural attack increases by one step on the following list, as if the creature's size had increased by one category. Damage dice increase as follows: 1d2, 1d3, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 2d6, 3d6, 4d6, 6d6, 8d6, 12d6. A weapon or attack that deals 1d10 points of damage increases as follows: 1d10, 2d8, 3d8, 4d8, 6d8, 8d8, 12d8.

Dodge Your training and reflexes allow you to react swiftly to avoid an opponent's attack. You gain a +1 dodge bonus to your AC. A condition that makes you lose your Dex bonus to AC also makes you lose the benefits of this feat.

Improved Natural Armor This creature's hide is tougher

than most. The creature's natural armor bonus increases by +1. **Special:** A creature can gain this feat multiple times. Each time the creature takes the feat, its natural armor bonus increases by another point.

Weapon Proficiencies You understand how to use your martial weapons in combat. You make attack rolls with all your martial weapons normally (without the non-proficient penalty).

Giant Creature Template: This template was used to enhance the abilities and statistics of this creature. Typically this means Size increase by one category; AC increase natural armor by +3; Attacks increase dice rolled by 1 step; Ability Scores +4 size bonus to Str and Con, -2 Dex.

Creature Type Traits (Ex) Creatures of many Types have common rules that apply to them, such as whether they eat, drink, require rest, breathe, and so on.

Outsider: Unlike most living creatures, an outsider does not have a dual nature--its soul and body form one unit. When an outsider is slain, no soul is set loose. Spells that restore souls to their bodies, such as raise dead, reincarnate, and resurrection, don't work on an outsider. It takes a different magical effect, such as limited wish, wish, miracle, or true resurrection to restore it to life. Outsiders breathe, but do not need to eat or sleep (although they can do so if they wish).

Immunities: Creatures with an Immunity to a type of damage or effect never suffer damage or the impact of those effects.

Resistances: Creatures with a Resistance to a type of damage suffer only 50% of the damage inflicted from that source. If a number is listed next to the Resistance, the creature may ignore that much damage each time damage from that type of source inflicts damage on that creature.

Vulnerabilities: Creatures with a vulnerability suffer twice as much damage from that source each time they suffer damage from that source. Other, non-damage-based vulnerabilities (e.g., light blindness) are described in full text.

Ability Focus (X) One of this creature's special attacks is particularly difficult to resist. Choose one of the creature's special attacks. Add +2 to the DC for all saving throws against the special attack on which the creature focuses. **Special:** A creature can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time the creature takes the feat, it applies to a different special attack.

Blindsense (Ex) Range 60 ft.; Other creatures have blindsense, a lesser ability that lets the creature notice things it cannot see, but without the precision of blindsight. The creature with blindsense usually does not need to make Spot or Listen checks to notice and locate creatures within range of its blindsense ability, provided that it has line of effect to that creature. Any opponent the creature cannot see has total concealment (50% miss chance) against the creature with blindsense, and the blindsensing creature still has the normal miss chance when attacking foes that have concealment. Visibility still affects the movement of a creature with blindsense. A creature with blindsense is still denied its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class against attacks from creatures it cannot see.

Iron Will You are more resistant to mental effects. You get a +2 bonus on all Will saving throws.

Lightning Reflexes You have faster reflexes than normal. You get a +2 bonus on all Reflex saving throws.

Great Fortitude You are resistant to poisons, diseases, and other deadly maladies. You get a +2 bonus on all Fortitude saving throws.

Weapon Focus (X) You are especially good at using your chosen weapon. You gain a +1 bonus on all attack rolls you make using the selected weapon.

Can't Be Tripped (Ex) A creature with this ability cannot be tripped.

Grab (Ex) If you hit with the indicated attack (usually a claw or bite attack), you deal normal damage and can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. You have the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use the part of your body you used in the grab to hold the opponent. If you choose to do the latter, you take a -20 penalty on your CMB check to make and maintain the grapple, but do not gain the grappled condition itself. A successful hold does not deal any extra damage unless you also have the constrict special attack. If you do not constrict, each successful grapple check you make during successive rounds automatically deals the damage indicated for the attack that established the hold. Otherwise, you deal constriction damage as well. You receive a +4 bonus on combat maneuver checks made to start and maintain a grapple. Unless otherwise noted, grab can only be used on creatures of a size equal to or smaller than you.

Low-Light Vision (Ex) You can see x2 as far as humans in low illumination. Characters with low-light vision have eyes that are so sensitive to light that they can see twice as far as normal in dim light. Low-Light Vision is color vision. A spellcaster with low-light vision can read a scroll as long as even the tiniest candle flame is next to her as a source of light. Characters with low-light vision can see outdoors on a moonlit night as well as they can during the day.



Illustration 1: Bloodguise Diredamsel

Diredamsel (Bloodguise)



Low



Moderate



Advanced



Elite



Terrain

Any Urban or Ruins



Rarity

Rare



Role

Lurker / Solo



Organization

Solitary



Treasure

None

Overview

Diredamsel's **Vengeful Facade** aura no longer affects that creature.

Description

Bloodguise Diredamsels appear as gaunt, hallowed, and pale versions of their former lives. Their eyes appear dead, and their flesh drained of life; it's not uncommon for them to be mistaken for vampires or other humanoid undead.

Vengeful Facade

Although they are recognizable as female, and as the race they were in life, they exude such a dreadful aura of undeath and hatred that most fear to look directly at them.



Vengeful Facade (aura, visual): As a result, only those who were closest to a Diredamsel in life have a good chance to recognize her.

The Diredamsel need not be aware of being observed, or even of the presence of the witnessing party, for her **Vengeful Facade** aura to apply.

In game terms, to recognize the specific, living individual who a Diredamsel was in life, each creature who sees the Diredamsel may make a **Sense Motive** or **Perception** check (use the more favorable of the two skills) upon first glimpsing her. The GM should make the attempt in secret, resolving it before the Diredamsel is described to the players.

Loved ones and immediate or close family members (and others, subject to the GM's assessment) attempt the check at DC 12 / 16 / 20 / 24.

All others must succeed in a check opposed by the Diredamsel's **Disguise** skill.

Those who succeed in their check recognize the Diredamsel as a haunted, otherworldly version of the person they once knew. Those who fail see only a vaguely unsettling, potentially undead, woman.

This check may be attempted once per encounter, at the start of that encounter, not more than once per hour. Once a creature succeeds in their check, that

Lore



Common Lore (no check required): Some wronged women perish with their accounts unsettled, and live on in vengeful undeath.



Expanded Lore: Diredamsels are a type of undead, spawned from the corpses of murdered or suicided women, who struggled with horrible adversity or betrayal in life. Although they begin their undeath seeking vengeance for their specific circumstances, their hatred soon grows to encompass all betrayal and mistreatment in general—real or imagined.

Requires **Knowledge (Religion)** or **Spellcraft** (and ability to cast at least one Necromancy spell) check DC

14 / 18 / 22 / 26.

Environment

Bloodguise Diredamsels dwell in any occupied zone: typically they begin in the village they lived in or were murdered at.

They may travel on occasion, but this is generally only in pursuit of their targets.

Diredamsels

All of the various forms of **Diredamsel** are restless female spirits, trapped in the material plane in a kind of limbo state similar to that of ghosts, revenants, and other beleaguered undead. Unsettled scores, unfinished business, and righteous zeal are but some of the driving forces that capture the divine essence of soul for these fallow-hearted and ruthless wisps.

Diredamsels have one or more Targets of their wrath. In some cases, a Target can be a singular individual, perhaps someone who did the diredamsel or her loved ones wrong in her mortal life. This is referred to as an Inception Target: The target is explicitly defined upon the diredamsel's formation as an undead spectre.

Other diredamsels will Target more broadly, aiming their

anger and retribution at various people that fit certain criteria. Each Diredamsel will describe how it selects Targets. These are called “Ongoing Targets”. Unless otherwise described in a diredamsel’s description, Inception Targets always take priority over Ongoing Targets if the diredamsel has the option of pursuing more than one type of target.

In game terms, typically, a diredamsel will Target one of the PCs, or an NPC with whom they are familiar, as part of a larger plot or story.

Encounter Behavior

Once they have a Target, diredamsels will seek that target out, and will not rest until their needs are satisfied.

Combat




Diredamsels will fight in self-defense, but will seek to escape whenever possible if their assailants do not count their Target among their number. Diredamsels who lack a current target, but for whom the attackers do not qualify, may stay and fight.


Targeting

Bloodguise Diredamsels arise from violent, bloody deaths, often from intimate murders, muggings gone wrong, or innocent casualties of war. Inception Targets are whomever is responsible for the deaths that gave rise to the Bloodguise Diredamsel. Ongoing Targets are anyone else who participates in similar sorts of murder or deaths, which in certain types of establishment (e.g., military camps) may be in abundant supply.






Story Hooks





The following quest snippets or introductory story elements can be used to insert this creature into any existing plot or campaign setting.








-  An NPC Targeted by a diredamsel hires the PCs to help defend them from the diredamsel’s retribution.
-  One of the PCs is Targeted by the diredamsel.
-  An NPC known to the PCs is Targeted by the Diredamsel.

-  A military camp is plagued by killings; a bloodguise diredamsel is suspected.

Actions & Special Qualities

-  **Blood Hunter:** A Bloodguise Diredamsel seeks its prey by tracking its blood. Only living creatures with a circulatory system may qualify as Targets for a Bloodguise Diredamsel. A Bloodguise Diredamsel has a +8 competence bonus on all Scent and Tracking attempts to follow one of its Targets.
-  **Bloodhunt Strike:** A Bloodguise Diredamsel strikes from the shadows in a brutal display of hostility. This functions as a Rogue’s Sneak Attack ability, and inflicts an additional 3d6 damage to surprised opponents. In addition, the current Target of a Bloodguise Diredamsel counts as flat-footed in any round in which he did not inflict at least 1 point of damage on the Diredamsel on his prior turn.
-  **Bloody Strikes:** Wounds inflicted by a Bloodguise Diredamsel inflict ongoing Bleed damage of 1d4 points per round until the victim receives magical healing, or has their wounds tended to with a Heal check.
-  **Hypnotic Accusatory:** If a Bloodguise Diredamsel encounters her Target in a one-on-one setting, she will start to chant a ritual litany of her victim’s misdeeds in a sybilant tone. This has the effect of a charm person spell, with DC 18; the Diredamsel will repeat her Accusatory each round (forcing another save attempt) until either the charm takes hold, the Target flees auditory range, or someone attacks the Diredamsel. Note that the DC increases if the Diredamsel has wounded the Target in a previous encounter.
-  **Taint of Vengeance:** Any creature who suffers damage from a Bloodguise Diredamsel’s attacks, and survives the encounter, is still infused with a tiny portion of the wraith’s vengeful energies. The Bloodguise Diredamsel who inflicted the damage gains the following benefits relative to her victims: Scent/Tracking bonus increases to +12; +1 competence bonus to hit; +1 competence bonus to damage; +1 competence bonus to Saves for abilities, spells, and effects suffered from the victim; +2 DC for abilities of the Diredamsel against the victim. These benefits last as long as the victim and the Bloodguise Diredamsel are both alive, and are not removed by magical healing, remove curse, restoration, or similar healing magicks.

				
CR	9	14	19	24
Align / Size	LE Medium (incorporeal)	LE Medium (incorporeal)	LE Large (incorporeal)	LE Large (incorporeal)
HD / Type	Undead 9	Undead 14	Undead 19	Undead 24
Initiative	+7	+9	+8	+11

				
Senses	Perception +18 Darkvision 60'	Perception +25 Darkvision 60'	Perception +30 Darkvision 60'	Perception +35 Darkvision 60'
 Defense				
AC	22 touch 22; ff 18 +3 Dex; +1 Dodge; +8 Deflection	28 touch 26; ff 22 +5 Dex; +2 Natural; +1 Dodge; +10 Deflection	28 touch 24; ff 23 -1 Size; +4 Dex; +4 Natural; +1 Dodge; +10 Deflection	31 touch 27; ff 23 -1 Size; +7 Dex; +4 Natural; +1 Dodge; +10 Deflection
hp	109 (9d8)+72	205 (14d8)+140	278 (19d8)+190	350 (24d8)+240
Saves	Fort +11 Ref +8 Will +12	Fort +14 Ref +11 Will +17	Fort +16 Ref +12 Will +19	Fort +18 Ref +17 Will +22
Def Abilities	Incorporeal, Weaknesses Vulnerability to Fire; Immunities Ability Drain, Cold, Death Effects, Death from Massive Damage, Disease, Energy Drain, Exhaustion, Fatigue, Mind-Affecting Effects, Nonlethal Damage, Paralysis, Poison, Sleep, Stunning			
 Offense				
Movement	Fly 30' (Perfect)			
Attacks	Melee claw +9/+9 (1d4) or Melee touches +9/+9 (4d6)	Melee claw +15/+15 (1d6) or Melee touches +15/+15 (4d8)	Melee claw +17/+17 (1d8) or Melee touches +17/+17 (8d6)	Melee claw +24/+24 (1d8) or Melee touches +24/+24 (8d6)
Space / Reach	5' / 5'	5' / 5'	5' / 5'	10' / 10'
Special Atks	Blood Hunter (+8), Bloodhunt Strike 2d6, Bloody Strikes 1d4, Hypnotic Accusatory (DC 18), Taint of Vengeance (+12, +1 to hit, +1 Saves, +2 DC)	Blood Hunter (+10), Bloodhunt Strike 3d6, Bloody Strikes 1d6, Hypnotic Accusatory (DC 22), Taint of Vengeance (+14, +2 to hit, +2 Saves, +3 DC)	Blood Hunter (+12), Bloodhunt Strike 5d6, Bloody Strikes 2d4, Hypnotic Accusatory (DC 26), Taint of Vengeance (+16, +3 to hit, +3 Saves, +4 DC)	Blood Hunter (+14), Bloodhunt Strike 7d6, Bloody Strikes 2d6, Hypnotic Accusatory (DC 30), Taint of Vengeance (+20, +5 to hit, +5 Saves, +6 DC)
 Statistics				
Ability Scores	Str * Dex 16 Con * Int 16 Wis 22 Cha 26	Str * Dex 20 Con * Int 20 Wis 26 Cha 30	Str * Dex 18 Con * Int 20 Wis 26 Cha 30	Str * Dex 24 Con * Int 20 Wis 26 Cha 30
Core Attack	Base Atk +6 CMB +9 CMD 28	Base Atk +10 CMB +15 CMD 36	Base Atk +14 CMB +19 CMD 40	Base Atk +18 CMB +26 CMD 47

Feats



Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Wind Stance



Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (Claw, Touches), Lightning Reflexes, Vital Strike, Wind Stance



Accursed, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Devastating Strike, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (Claw, Touches), Improved Vital Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Vital Strike, Wind Stance



Accursed, Bleeding Critical, Combat Reflexes, Crippling Critical, Critical Focus, Devastating Strike, Dodge, Flaying Critical, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (Claw, Touches), Improved Vital Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Vital Strike, Wind Stance

Skills

Acrobatics +3, Appraise +3, Bluff +8, Craft (Untrained) +3, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +20, Escape Artist +3, Fly +23, Heal +6, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (Arcana) +15, Perception +18, Perform (Untrained) +8, Ride +3, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +15, Survival +6

Acrobatics +5, Appraise +5, Bluff +10, Craft (Untrained) +5, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +27, Escape Artist +5, Fly +30, Heal +8, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (Arcana) +17, Perception +25, Perform (Untrained) +10, Ride +5, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +22, Survival +8

Acrobatics +4, Appraise +5, Bluff +10, Craft (Untrained) +5, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +32, Escape Artist +4, Fly +32, Heal +8, Intimidate +32, Knowledge (Arcana) +17, Perception +30, Perform (Untrained) +10, Ride +4, Sense Motive +30, Stealth +22, Survival +8

Acrobatics +7, Appraise +5, Bluff +10, Craft (Untrained) +5, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +37, Escape Artist +7, Fly +40, Heal +8, Intimidate +37, Knowledge (Arcana) +17, Perception +35, Perform (Untrained) +10, Ride +7, Sense Motive +35, Stealth +30, Survival +8

Languages

Common



Special Qualities & Abilities

Incorporeal (Ex) You have no physical body. You can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons or creatures that strike as magic weapons, and spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities. You have no physical body. You can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons or creatures that strike as magic weapons, and spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities. You are immune to all nonmagical attack forms. Even when hit by spells or magic weapons, you take only half damage from a corporeal source except for channel energy. Although it is not a magical attack, holy water can affect incorporeal undead. Corporeal spells and effects that do not cause damage only have a 50% chance of affecting you. Force spells and effects, such as from a magic missile, affect you normally.



Feats

Bleeding Critical Your critical hits cause opponents to bleed profusely. Whenever you score a critical hit with a slashing or piercing weapon, your opponent takes 2d6 points of bleed damage (see Appendix 2) each round on his turn, in addition to the damage dealt by the critical hit. Bleed damage can be stopped by a DC 15 Heal skill check or through any magical healing. The effects of this feat stack.

Combat Reflexes You can make additional attacks of opportunity. You may make 7 additional attacks of opportunity per round. With this feat, you may also make attacks of opportunity while flat-footed.

Crippling Critical You are able to maim a target and hinder its movement. Whenever you score a critical hit against an opponent, its speed is halved for 1 minute. A successful Fortitude save reduces this duration to 1d4 rounds. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + your base attack bonus. Against creatures with multiple types of movement, you must choose which movement type to affect. A flying creature hit by this attack must make a DC 10 Fly check to remain airborne, and has its maneuverability reduced by one step.

Critical Focus You are trained in the arts of causing pain. You receive a +4 circumstance bonus on attack rolls made to confirm critical hits.

Devastating Strike Pitting all of your strength and resolve against your enemy, you deliver a strike that is impossible to ignore. Whenever you use Vital Strike, Improved Vital Strike,

or Greater Vital Strike, you gain a +2 bonus on each extra weapon damage dice roll those feats grant (+6 maximum). This bonus damage is multiplied on a critical hit.

Flaying Critical Your critical hits weaken your opponents' defenses. Whenever you score a critical hit, your opponent takes a -1 penalty to its natural armor bonus for the duration of the encounter. This penalty is cumulative, but cannot reduce an opponent's natural armor bonus below 0.

Improved Vital Strike You can make a single attack that deals a large amount of damage. When you use the attack action, you can make one attack at your highest base attack bonus that deals additional damage. Roll the weapon's damage dice for the attack three times and add the results together before adding bonuses from Strength, weapon abilities (such as flaming), precision-based damage, and other damage bonuses. These extra damage dice are not multiplied on a critical hit, but are added to the total.

Vital Strike You make a single attack that deals significantly more damage than normal. When you use the attack action, you can make one attack at your highest base attack bonus that deals additional damage. Roll the weapon's damage dice for the attack twice and add the results together before adding bonuses from Strength, weapon abilities (such as flaming), precision-based damage, and other damage bonuses. These extra damage dice are not multiplied on a critical hit, but are added to the total.


Wind Stance Your erratic movements make it difficult for enemies to pinpoint your location. If you move more than 5 feet this turn, you gain 20% concealment for 1 round against ranged attacks.

Appendix


Notes & Conventions

As is typical in a roleplaying game adventure or module, some text herein is meant to be read or shown to players verbatim... but the majority of the content is meant to be for the Game Master's (GM) eyes only. Below please find some visual conventions that make this differentiation clear.

Player Descriptive Text


 These sections are meant to be read aloud to players as-is. You are of course free to introduce your own changes as you see fit as a Game Master. Player Descriptive Text blocks are meant to serve as informative tidbits that have been preconstructed to reflect the exact nature of the situation being encountered by the party.

GM-Only Notes

 Granted, nearly everything not highlighted in Player Descriptive Text is not meant to be read aloud to the players. However, some content is much more "sensitive" than others.

GM-Only Notes such as this typically give away plot points, major background, or other information that the players may not normally have access to—either right now, or in some cases, ever. Make sure to conceal these sections from players unless there is a specific reason to tell them!

Designer's Soapbox


 In some cases, the game designer will want to express a specific opinion about some aspect of the adventure. Typically, this takes the form of a discussion on interpreting rules, or a recommendation as to how best to play or run a particular piece of the adventure. In all cases, veteran GMs should feel comfortable ignoring these "soapbox" diatribes... but veteran and new GMs alike may find something of interest in the coalesced experience of three decades of roleplaying experience!


Quests


A quest can be large, tiny, or in between. Some can be very quickly accomplished; others span days, weeks, or even years, across multiple cities and even planes of existence!

In this book, all quests, big or small, have a similar presentation and key elements, as shown by the green block below.

Quest: Rats in the Cellar (example)

 **Summary:** Kill rats in a fantasy tavern. Fun and creative.


 **Rewards:** Rat corpses. Plus 10 gp from the bartender.

 **Locations:** Bar.

 **Key NPCs:** Bartender.

 **Kickoff:** When any PC speaks with the bartender.

 **Description:**


The bartender asks the party to slay  **2d6** Giant Rats that have infested his basement.


In so doing, they will benefit from his goodwill, and a reward of **10 gp**.


Obstacles

Doors, locks, and other obstacles that don't necessarily incorporate a trap. You'll find these prefaced by little brown symbols like this one:

Locked Secret Door (example)

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 30;
Perception DC 16; **Break** DC 15; **Disable Device** DC 18


 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 30;
Perception DC 18; **Break** DC 17; **Disable Device** DC 20

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 30;
Perception DC 20; **Break** DC 19; **Disable Device** DC 22

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 30;
Perception DC 22; **Break** DC 21; **Disable Device** DC 24

Skill Checks

Whether it's a single, simple check, or a series of checks in escalating difficulty, skill checks may be an opportunity to either avoid disaster or discover what might otherwise remain hidden and ignored. Such chances are indicated via yellow symbols as follows:

Some PCs may have insight into the Blacksmith's wealth; make a  DC 12 **Knowledge (Profession)** check.



Skill Challenges



Skill checks are typically a single roll, often made in secret by the GM. A **skill challenge** is usually a bit more involved than a simple check—or there's simply more at stake. Either way, a challenge is a more formal, and explicit, exercise, intentionally engaged in by the players.

You'll find a skill challenge in a yellow box such as this:

Falling Timbers (example)


First Check: DC 18 **Perception** (16 if aflame) to notice the falling building; success cancels subsequent checks.

Second Check: DC 15 **Acrobatics** to avoid the debris; failure inflicts  **2d6** points of crushing damage plus a possible  **1d8** points of fire damage; success cancels subsequent checks.

Third Check: DC 12 **Strength** to dislodge one's self from the debris; failure inflicts  1d4 points of crushing damage plus a possible  1d8 points of fire damage; success quits the challenge.


Rewards

Treasure, swords, gems, keys, filthy lucre—this is the stuff your players are really gunning for, right? Well, that, plus a good time with friends. And maybe, if you're lucky, a good, engaging session of shared storytelling that you'll all remember for a long time.

At any rate, rewards are shown with blue boxes like this one. Some containers have common treasure, which applies equally to all difficulty bands; these are shown with the badges for all four bands like this: .


Other treasure is “scaled”; that is, the PCs receive different treasure depending on what difficulty band they are playing at. Select the band that's appropriate for the level of the PCs; that is the treasure they receive. They do **not** receive all of the treasure listed across all four bands!


Secret Closet Chest

 **Brushgather geneology book** (a small book; value 6 gp)

 **19 gp; opal pendant on gold chain** (value 31 gp)

 **8 pp; 42 gp; opal pendant on gold chain** (value 72 gp)

 **19 pp; 37 gp; opal pendant on gold chain** (value 180 gp)

 **52 pp; 84 gp; opal pendant on gold chain** (value 428 gp)


Traps

Hey, blame the rogue—who in all likelihood is suffering the brunt of the trap s/he either failed to detect, and/or to disarm. Whether it becomes a bragging right, a bargaining chip, or an epitaph, traps of all manner are shown in a purple box like this one.


Note that the statistics for the impact of most traps scale to the four difficulty bands; select the one that is appropriate for the PCs in your game.

Acid Arrow Chest Trap


Type Magic; **Trigger** Touch; **Reset** none

 **Perception** DC 18; **Disable Device** DC 20

Effect spell effect (*acid arrow*; Atk +1 ranged touch (1d4 acid damage for 2 rounds)


 **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 22

Effect spell effect (*acid arrow*; Atk +3 ranged touch (2d4 acid damage for 2 rounds)

 **Perception** DC 22; **Disable Device** DC 24

Effect spell effect (*acid arrow*; Atk +5 ranged touch (2d4

acid damage for 3 rounds)

 **Perception** DC 24; **Disable Device** DC 22


Effect spell effect (*acid arrow*; Atk +7 ranged touch (2d4 acid damage for 4 rounds)

Items

Be they simple items, magical items, rods, staves, potions, books, or something wondrous, items share a common block of information like the following... note that this format is used for all manner of non-weapon, non-armor equipment and usable items, both magical and mundane:

Adventurer's Chronicle (example)

Value 50 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.; **Materials** paper; **Nature** non-magical; **Aura** none; **Slot** usable; **CL** n/a

This book is chock full of useful information. When used as a reference (an action that typically takes  1d4 full rounds of searching the text), an *adventurer's chronicle* grants a +2 competency bonus on a specific **Knowledge** check for which the book is designed.

Construction Requirements means to assemble a physical book; the author must have at least **10** ranks in the skill for which you are designing the book; **Cost** 30 gp

Variable Challenge

One of the things that has frustrated many GMs is that adventures are almost universally designed in this manner: for a specific level of challenge, or at most, a very narrow range of PC levels (e.g., “4th to 6th level”).

One might argue that this Variable Challenge concept is at the very heart of *Aquillae: Bestiary of the Realm*, and *Monsters of Aquillae*, why they exist in the first place.

There are many advantages to this approach, not least of which being the guarantee that all challenges (monsters, traps, and NPCs) are calibrated very specifically to that narrow zone of difficulty.

The drawback, of course, is the narrowness of that range. GMs wishing to run a module designed for 10th-level PCs, for example, are either flat out of luck, or have to do some fairly intensive work to scale the content up or down to better align with the PCs she is playing with.

The degree to which a particular GM, or even gaming group, enjoys perusing and tweaking game statistics—“crunch”, in common parlance—varies, of course. Some GMs love crunch, and spend a majority of their prep time creating and refining their challenges to ensure the crunch is accurate and appropriately challenging. On the other end of the spectrum are “by the seat of their pants” GMs, who ignore crunch almost entirely, rarely referring to stat blocks lest it distract from the focus of storytelling.

This adventure, and in a broader sense, **Infinium Game Studio**, does not want to judge as to which approach is “better” or “worse”. What matters is that you have fun and enjoy yourselves!

However, we do want to make it as easy as possible to play this adventure no matter what level your PCs happen to be.

Experience Points and Reward Nuggets

There are many ways of calculating, dispersing, and accounting for experience points (XP) in a Pathfinder gaming group. What follows is a method that I have used over the decades, and it's been a lot of fun. Although it may not be for every gaming group—your mileage may vary—it's an interesting spin on traditional methods, and the approach may work for you.

Whether this approach works for you or not, however, it's worth reading through, because all of the Quests in this adventure denote XP awards using this method.

I Want Candy

In the author's early days as a GM, I tossed out candies as rewards to the players when their characters did a good job. Candy could be distributed for defeating a kobold, picking a lock, dodging an attack, convincing the castle guard to look the other way, or any of the ordinary actions whose consequence typically involve experience points.

However, I also gave out candy for good roleplaying, convincing dialogue, outstanding (or horrid) emulation of accents, meta-jokes about the circumstances of the game that were truly hilarious, suggesting things to me as the GM or other players that took the story in a new direction, or—and I have to be honest, here—helping me as a GM.

My general rule was, if I forgot a rule, and you pointed it out in a way that didn't make you seem like a jerk, then you got rewarded. This could be something as innocuous as reminding me that your elf ranger's longbow was firing +1 arrows, or as significant as reminding me that a certain piece of equipment granted a reroll to a critically-failed outcome.

Generally speaking, candy rewards were given out in my games for anything—literally, anything—that made the gaming experience more fun. Doorbell rings, and the pizza's here, and your character is tied up in the cyclops' cave, so you know you won't be doing anything for a few minutes, and so you go and grab the grub, and tip the delivery guy—that's worth a candy. Tell a funny joke—that's worth a candy. Save the life of your comrade, only to drug him unconscious and use him as a prop, in the manner of Weekend at Bernie's—okay, that's a little ghoulish, but it's in character, and amazing, so, yeah, that's three candies right there.

Candy as XP

Candy is awesome, though for one of my gaming group, who was a diabetic, it was a controlled and mindful awesomeness. But even the most free-wheeling player wants their character to level up. I get it.

At the end of each gaming session, my players would “turn in” their candy wrappers. Each wrapper represented something gone right, a good deed done—and therefore it was converted to XP. Generally speaking, no matter what the PCs' levels, no matter what the adventure, 10 candy wrappers meant you advanced to the next level. If you fell short—let's say, you only got 6—then it meant you

were closer for next gaming session (i.e., 4 needed in this example).

As years went on, it became a bit less practical and/or healthy to urge my friends to consume at least ten pieces of candy every time we got together, and so the approach was tweaked. Instead of candy wrappers, gold stars, or spare dice in a particular color, or Warhammer 40,000 figurines. The point was, you got a token, a “nugget” of reward, which was later converted into XP.

Rules lawyers hate this method, and I respect that. But even the most hardened min/maxer eventually recognizes that this approach, despite its drawbacks, keeps play flowing quite quickly, and keeps everyone focused on what I believe should be the goal of any roleplaying game session.

Namely: to have fun!


Reward Stars: The Formalized Approach

Whether or not you appreciated the above anecdote, or the approach it describes, it's required reading, because now we'll get to how it applies to **Dark Obelisk: Berinn corte**.

As with everything else in this book, the GM is encouraged to completely ignore or change this approach if you feel it would make it work better for your gaming group.

The following represent opportunities to gain an experience point reward in this adventure:

- **Defeating** monsters and NPCs.
- Avoiding traps, picking locks, or otherwise **overcoming obstacles**.
- Succeeding in **skill challenges** or checks.
- Fulfilling other objects in pursuit of a **Quest**.

Monsters and NPCs in this adventure list the **XP** reward the PCs should obtain for defeating them in combat. They also list the number of “**Reward Stars**” players should receive for success. This is denoted like this:  +2.

Think of a **Reward Star** as a sugar-free and abstracted version of a piece of candy from the earlier anecdote: players receive one or more most times that they achieve something in the game.

Locks, traps, and skill checks are typically “quadded”; each level of **CR** lists a suggested **XP** reward, but also a number of **Reward Stars**.

Quests only list **Reward Stars**. This is because **Quests** should be fun, interesting, and above all, useful to the PCs, but shouldn't be game-breakingly powerful or ignorably impotent. A simple delivery quest, for example: what should that be worth? **500 XP**? For a level one character, that can be almost halfway to levelling up; for a level 19 character, that makes for a completely worthless diversion. Using **Reward Stars** solves this problem, by automatically scaling the reward to be significant regardless of character level.

If you follow the approach I've used, then at the end of each gaming session (or in between sessions, or at the start of the next session, whatever works best for your schedule), convert the **Reward Stars** to traditional **Experience Points**.

The GM is heavily encouraged to augment the rewards documented with additional rewards, for perhaps-less-tangible contributions: good jokes, helpful behavior, playing

fair and nice, being a good sport, paying for or even just ordering dinner, that sort of thing.

Such “intangible rewards” should be general in nature: a good, timely joke should be rewarded with a chunk of XP that’s meaningful and helpful to the PC in question, whether they’re level 1 or level 19.

Stay In Character... Or Else

In rare cases, or with certain gaming groups, the GM should reserve the right to remove or revoke the **Reward Stars** a particular player, or the group entire, has earned.

Such penalties should not be applied in a discouraging manner, or against players who are genuinely trying, but whose luck is simply poor, or for whom things just aren’t working out. Indeed, successful roleplaying in the face of dire circumstances should be rewarded more!

Reward Stars should only be revoked if the player is detracting from play, distracting others, making inappropriate jokes not appreciated by the rest of the group, not paying their fair share... or just generally being a jerk.

Converting Reward Stars to XP

Each **Reward Star** represents different **XP** depending on what your current level is.

If you’ve assigned **Reward Stars** to a particular PC, use the character’s current level on the table below to convert to an **XP** reward.

On some occasions, you may instead have granted **Reward Stars** to the party as a whole. In this scenario, calculate the **Average Party Level** (APL) as you normally would, and use that on the table below to convert the reward to standard **XP**.

If a PC has more than the minimum sufficient **Reward Stars** to advance in level, they may continue to advance! In such a scenario, count Stars using the PC’s current level, until they level up. Any remaining stars are converted to **XP** using the character’s new level. In exceptionally rare circumstances—or with exceptionally indulgent GMs!—this may involve a PC levelling up multiple times between sessions, though such power-levelling is generally discouraged.

Finally, in addition to different methods of determining rewards, gaming groups tend to have different theories as to how rapidly characters should level up. Slow, average, and fast tracks are shown here, which scale to the corresponding Character Advancement experience point totals in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*.

For purposes of **Reward Stars**, the following standard has been used:

- **Slow** advancement requires 15 **Reward Stars** to advance.
- Advancement with the **Average** progression demands 10 **Reward Stars** per level.
- Only 5 **Reward Stars** are needed to advance following the **Fast** track.

Table 1: Converting Reward Stars to XP


Level, CR, or APL	Slow	Avg	Fast
1	200	200	260


Level, CR, or APL	Slow	Avg	Fast
2	300	300	400
3	433	400	540
4	600	600	800
5	800	800	1,000
6	1,200	1,200	1,600
7	1,600	1,600	2,200
8	2,533	2,400	3,200
9	3,000	3,000	4,200
10	5,000	5,000	6,800
11	6,333	6,500	8,000
12	9,667	9,500	13,000
13	12,667	13,000	17,000
14	19,333	19,000	26,000
15	26,333	25,500	35,000
16	36,667	41,000	50,000
17	53,333	50,000	70,000
18	76,667	75,000	100,000
19	100,000	105,000	140,000
20	n/a	n/a	n/a


“Quadded” Stat Blocks


Toward the goal of having an adventure that can be run with PCs of various levels, all NPCs and monsters in this adventure have four separate sets of statistics.

These represent iterations of the creature in four distinct scales of challenge. These scales are referred to, in ascending difficulty, as **Low**, **Moderate**, **Advanced**, and **Elite**.

 **Low**-level statistics are the default, and are intended for parties of 1st to 4th level PCs. Typically, the **Low CR** for a creature will be in the range of fractional, up to 4. You may see this referred to as “**1L**”.

 **Moderate** statistics present a bit more challenge, and are meant for 5th to 8th level PCs. **CRs** can be in the range from 4-10. You may see this referred to as “**2M**”.

 **Advanced** creatures give even more of a fight, representing **CRs** in the range of 10-15, and are meant for adventurers of the same levels. You may see this referred to as “**3A**”.

 **Elite** monsters and NPCs are the most evolved, and present formidable difficulty in the 12-20 **CR** range. These stat blocks are designed for PCs above 15th level. You may see this referred to as “**4E**”.

To avoid confusion, elsewhere in the text outside of the creature’s quadded stat block definition, the statistics referred to are the **Low**, or default, block. For example, the condensed, “vital stats” block that is shown in red where the NPC or monster is introduced in the adventure uses the **Low** values.


Quadded Challenge Blocks


Skill challenges and checks, traps, poisons, and obstacles sometimes have quadded stat blocks as well.


Although nearly all NPCs and monsters have quadded stat blocks, not all other game elements do. This is intentional. It represents the reality that although monsters and people might be of advanced difficulty, the city of **Berinncorte** exists in a typical, average fantasy realm—DC 50 Mythic-caliber locks simply doesn't exist, let alone on every door in town!


Below is an example of a door that has a quadded challenge block. The icons represent the scale of increasing difficulty; from top to bottom, they are **Low**, **Moderate**, **Advanced**, and **Elite**.

Locked Secret Wooden Door

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 16; **Break** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 18

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 20; **Break** DC 24; **Disable Device** DC 22

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 22; **Break** DC 26; **Disable Device** DC 24

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 24; **Break** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 26

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