

LITTLE RED'S GUIDE TO LICHDOM



D&D **PATHFINDER**
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE


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Liches

Credits

-PRODUCER-

SCOTT GLADSTEIN

-DESIGNER-

SCOTT GLADSTEIN, IAN SISSON, CHRISTOS GURD

-EDITORS-

SCOTT GLADSTEIN, IAN SISSON, BRYNN PETANO

-ARTISTS-

WREN HUNTER, LAWRENCE VAN DER MERWE, HOPSY, ARMANDO AYALA,
CLAUDIO CASINI, GARY DUPUIS

-GRAPHIC DESIGN/LAYOUT-

SCOTT GLADSTEIN

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Questions? Comments? Contact us at:

ScottGladstein@littleredgoblingames.com

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Chapter 1: Introduction

WHAT IS A LICH?

Liches have appeared in many works of fiction and mythology with varied rules, appearances, and qualities. After delving into the related works we have decided that the following characteristics make one a lich. At their core a lich is **an evil, intelligent, undead spellcaster, who has become functionally immortal by putting their soul into a phylactery**. While aspects of them vary and can be subverted (such as a “good lich”), these are what make a “lich” a “lich”.

The word “lich” rhymes with “witch” and is derived from the Old High German word “lih” or “lika” for “corpse”. In modern and slightly-archaic English, graveyards are still occasionally called “lichyards” and the entrance to a graveyard is referred to as “lychgate” in Britain. If we look into the origins of liches in fiction the first good example we have is that of “Koschei the Immortal” from Russian folklore. He was a deathless king or father figure who had placed his soul in a convoluted “nested” object.

For example, in one story his soul resided in a needle, in an egg, in a duck, in a hare, in a log, floating on a pond. In these tales such as “The Death of Koschei the Deathless”, he often interacts with other Russo-mythological figures like Baba Yaga and Ivan Tsarevich.

The stories almost always ended with Koschei being killed, only to return in a different, unrelated story. The iconic image of the lich, that of a skeletal mage, comes from early sword and sorcery fiction. Authors like Robert E. Howard and Gardner Fox wrote about powerful sorcerers who would transcend death, becoming shriveled husks that retain an unnatural life.

Other Iconic Liches: The Lich King (Warcraft), Lord Voldemort (Harry Potter), Sauron (Lord Of The Rings), Witch-king of Angmar (Lord Of The Rings), The Horned King (The Black Cauldron), Rasputin (Anastasia), Vecna (Dungeons and Dragons), The Lich (Adventure Time)



*Death King Droma,
Seeker of Barbelo*

Chapter 2: Game Mastery

LICHES IN YOUR GAME

Implementing a lich in your game makes a statement about the sort of game you're running and the kinds of threats your players are expected to face. A lich is a "smart" enemy with a lot of unique abilities and spells that do unusual things. Liches don't come at players directly; they mislead, obfuscate, and debilitate their foes while relying on their own allies and thralls to deal with threats more directly. When confronted directly, they remain confident in their spellcasting and the knowledge that if killed their "death" will only be temporary. They are repeat enemies that the players can face time and time again; killing a lich should be a major arc of a campaign as the players are forced to track down the well-hidden and well-guarded phylactery in order to put the lich down for good.

Liches are never "mooks" or low-ranking enemies; they are either the main antagonist, a major foe in their own right, or at the very least the top lieutenant of a more powerful evil force. As such a lich should be an "event" or an "occasion" rather than just a random encounter. Give them the means to fully benefit from their powers; the rooms the players encounter them in might have secret passages they can escape through and areas tailored to make use of their spells, their lair should be filled with martial enemies under their employ with traps in key points, and their phylactery should be well hidden.

If a lich is the primary antagonist in your game, give them class levels. The average lich is a mid-level encounter and even the stronger ones may lack the staying power or versatility to stand up to an adventuring party for long, particularly for even a mid-level game, so you'll want to beef up your lich antagonist. Many of the templates and variants in this book are great ways to create a distinct opponent without having to put too much work into extensively rebuilding them.

THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE CONSIDERED

Lichdom is a unique form of existence; both accursed and everlasting, it may result in the any of following:

Apathy: Liches may become somewhat apathetic and are often willing to solve problems by simply letting time pass. It is perfectly legitimate for a lich, faced with unfavorable odds, to simply elect to take a nap under a mountain for a century and simply outlast whatever crusading heroes they are faced with. This doesn't mean they don't stew in the juices of their obsessive anger and plot for a hundred years on how they will exact revenge on those who have wronged them (or their descendants), but it is a viable tactic for them.

Developing Skills: A lich becomes a lich for power and power means developing certain skills and abilities. If a lich was a bard in life, it is not likely that they'll stop playing music. Instead, they'll continue to develop their skill and become legendary in their talent. Most dedicate themselves to the study of arcane magic or the crafting of magical items but it is not unheard of for a lich to become a master orator, torturer, loremaster, mad scientist, poisoner, or even a twisted doctor in their thousand years of eternal unlife.

Planning: Since they can effectively "live" forever, barring an errant adventurer, liches think in the long term with plans that can span generations. Liches think in decades and centuries, not months and years. This does mean that if a hero interrupts their plans, they may set a lich back centuries of work. Foiling a lich's plot on the cusp of completion can enrage them simply because it means ages of wasted effort. At the same time, it is reasonable to assume a lich has had time to think of every eventuality and come up with contingency plans stacked on contingency plans. Just because adventurers stop one part of a plan doesn't mean the entire plan is ruined. It can require truly unthinkable bizarre circumstances to surprise a lich that has had time to plot.

Eternal Evil: Liches are evil. What it means to be evil may vary but, at their core, they are selfish individuals with a penchant for cruelty. This, compounded over hundreds of years, can lead to a very twisted soul. Not only are they evil but they are *powerful and evil* - a



*Lady Quelme,
Queen of the Cinder
Elves*

creature whose every evil whim cannot be resisted by your average creature. Liches can become obsessive, undisciplined, mad, and increasingly cruel over time; the older they are the less “human” they are. A lich who has lived for a thousand years might be on par with the most depraved demon, even if they have the decorum of a politician on the outside

Escaping Fate: Some liches don’t seek out undeath for power, but as a means to escape disease, infirmity, and other mortal ailments. Having gone through every other option available to them, these poor souls turn to dark necromancy to free themselves from suffering. Over time, they may lose sight of their original desires and descend into madness.

Liches Are Old: When a lich was born things were different. Even if they “keep up with the times” they are still often out of touch with the social, cultural, political, and technological norms of the times they

find themselves in. The older a lich is, the more resistant to new ideas they generally become, the more they will find themselves falling back on “what they know”, and the less they will be able to connect and interact with “the common person”. They might find more in common with other ancient things like dragons, outsiders, intelligent undead, and immortals.

DEMILICHES

Games that contain liches often contain a more powerful form of lich called a “demilich”. Such liches are often nothing more than a skull, a skeletal hand, or even just a single bone as they leave the physical realm to seek greater power elsewhere. They live lives of the spirit, projecting to many realms to voraciously learn profane secrets and unlock new dark powers.

Different games treat them differently. Some have them losing their phylactery and becoming truly immortal while others just have them as “upgraded liches”, and still other times they are simply ancient liches who have lost interest in their mortal form. They present an interesting weakness: their physical form is easily destroyed and they care very little about matters of the mortal world. They really only care when provoked so, while they are more powerful, they are almost a lesser threat to the players in terms of agency unless the players encounter them projecting their spirit to another plane of existence where they have some business.

GOOD LICHES

The idea of a “good lich” exists largely as a creation of modern fantasy as a subversion of the trope of lichdom. These are sometimes called “archliches”, but no name has been widely adopted. Good liches have a number of reasons to exist and most commonly exist in societies/settings where undead are not inherently evil or are, at least, tolerated. Good liches can be immortal guardians of magical/holy sites, could have been created by good (or at least not evil) gods, or may even be a lich who obtained some kind of redemption.

For more information on good-aligned undead and non-evil necromantic philosophies please see our book, “Tome of Ethical Necromancy”.

Examples: Archliches (Dungeons and Dragons), Baelnorn (Forgotten Realms), Dead Man (Garrett, P.I), Brook (One Piece)

Chapter 3: The Path To Lichdom

The exact path to becoming a lich is unique for each spellcaster who attempts it. However, becoming a lich has some rules laid out and where the rules lack specificity we are here to help. In the simplest terms here is how to become a lich, according to each system.

In many instances the prospective lich lacks the means and skills necessary to properly achieve lichdom. In such circumstances they may seek a friend, ally, greater power, or even an enemy to help them transcend their mortal coil. While this has the benefit of allowing one to become a lich it also means that the one who helped you will be able to put some conditions on that. Maybe a deity who makes you into a lich (or helps) must hold onto your phylactery; an allied spellcaster might demand increasing payments over the years for their help and if you fail to pay them you die; or the one who helped you become a lich has a surefire way to kill you. Everything comes with strings attached.

COMMON TRAITS

Every lich took a unique path. Just because it worked for one lich, it doesn't mean that it will work for another person seeking lichdom. It may just kill them.

The path involves time and danger. The quest is a lengthy one involving many deadly adventures.

There is an immense cost. Those seeking lichdom may have to pay exorbitant sums to learn the secret, or pay dearly in a more metaphorical sense.

PATHFINDER (1ST EDITION)

- The character must be able to cast spells and have a caster level of 11 or higher.
- They must craft or obtain a receptacle for their soul, aka a phylactery. This requires that you use the Craft Wondrous Item feat. The phylactery costs 120,000 gp to create and has a caster level equal to that of its creator at the time of creation.
- At the end, you gain the lich template.

LICH TEMPLATE

(PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION)

"Lich" is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature (referred to hereafter as the base creature), provided it can create the required phylactery. A lich retains all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as the base creature + 2.

Alignment: Any evil.

Type: The creature's type changes to undead. Do not recalculate BAB, saves, or skill ranks.

Senses: A lich gains darkvision 60 ft.

Armor Class: A lich has a +5 natural armor bonus or the base creature's natural armor bonus, whichever is better.

Hit Dice: Change all of the creature's racial Hit Dice to d8s. All Hit Dice derived from class levels remain unchanged. As undead, liches use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points (instead of Constitution).

Defensive Abilities: A lich gains channel resistance +4, DR 15/bludgeoning and magic, and immunity to cold and electricity (in addition to those granted by its undead traits). The lich also gains the following defensive ability.

Rejuvenation (Su): When a lich is destroyed, its phylactery (which is generally hidden by the lich in a safe place far from where it chooses to dwell) immediately begins to rebuild the undead spellcaster's body nearby. This process takes 1d10 days—if the body is destroyed before that time passes, the phylactery merely starts the process anew. After this time passes, the lich awakens fully healed (albeit without any gear it left behind on its old body), usually with a burning need for revenge against those who previously destroyed it.

Melee Attack: A lich has a touch attack that it can use once per round as a natural weapon. A lich fighting without weapons uses its natural weapons (if it has any) in addition to its touch attack (which is treated as a primary natural weapon that replaces one claw or slam attack, if the creature has any). A lich armed with a weapon uses its weapons normally, and can use its touch attack as a secondary natural weapon.

Damage: A lich's touch attack uses negative energy to deal 1d8 points of damage to living creatures + 1 point of damage per 2 Hit Dice possessed by the lich. As negative energy, this damage can be used to heal undead creatures. A lich can take a full-round action to infuse itself with this energy, healing damage as if it had used its touch attack against itself.

Special Attacks: A lich gains the two special attacks described below. Save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 lich's HD + lich's Cha modifier unless otherwise noted.

Fear Aura (Su): Creatures of less than 5 HD in a 60-foot radius that look at the lich must succeed on a Will save or become frightened. Creatures with 5 HD or more must succeed at a Will save or be shaken for a number of rounds equal to the lich's Hit Dice. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same lich's aura for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Paralyzing Touch (Su): Any living creature a lich hits with its touch attack must succeed on a Fortitude save or be permanently paralyzed. Remove paralysis or any spell that can remove a curse can free the victim (see the bestow curse spell description, with a DC equal to the lich's save DC). The effect cannot be dispelled. Anyone paralyzed by a lich seems dead, though a DC 20 Perception check or a DC 15 Heal check reveals that the victim is still alive.

Abilities: Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +2. Being undead, a lich has no Constitution score.

Skills: Liches have a +8 racial bonus on Perception, Sense Motive, and Stealth checks. A lich always treats Climb, Disguise, Fly, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Perception, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, and Stealth as class skills. Otherwise, skills are the same as the base creature.

PATHFINDER (2ND EDITION)

- Can be any kind of caster capable of casting 6th level spells.
- Must be the primary caster of the Ritual of Undeath.
- At the time of writing this, the ritual does not exist in any core books. We have presented an option below.
- The final step involves imbibing a deadly concoction or casting dreadful incantations that transform them into a lich.

RITUAL OF UNDEATH

Ritual 6

Uncommon, Evil, Necromancy

Cast 1 week; **Cost**; a poison that results in death, 60,000 gp worth of various profane material components, a phylactery **Secondary Casters** 0

Primary Check Arcana (master), Occultism (master), or Religion (master);

Secondary Checks none

Range self; **Target(s)** the caster

You transform yourself into a lich, gaining the abilities described in the lich's entry. You become evil, lose all abilities associated with being a living creature, increase your spellcaster level by 1, and increase your spell DCs and spell attack roll by 2. The phylactery used becomes the vessel for the soul of the newly created lich.

Satrap Jocaster the
Curseling



LICH TEMPLATE

(PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION)

A lich gains the following abilities:

Spellcasting Increase the spellcaster's level by 1 and change its statistics as follows. Increase spell DCs and spell attack roll by 2. (Note: This is listed in the "creating a lich" section.)

Darkvision

Saving Throws +1 status bonus to all saves vs. positive

Negative Healing

Rejuvenation (arcane, necromancy) When a lich is destroyed, its soul immediately transfers to its phylactery. A lich can be permanently destroyed only if its phylactery is found and destroyed.

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Resistances cold 20, physical 15 (except magic bludgeoning)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 60 feet, DC 30

Hand of the Lich All lichs have a hand unarmed attack that deals 1d8 negative damage for every 3 levels and inflicts a paralyzing touch. This attack has the finesse trait.

Drain Phylactery [free action] **Frequency** once per day;

Effect The lich taps into its phylactery's power to cast any arcane spell up to the highest level the lich can cast, even if the spell being cast is not one of the lich's prepared spells. The lich's phylactery doesn't need to be present for the lich to use this ability.

Paralyzing Touch (arcane, curse, incapacitation, necromancy) A creature damaged by the lich's hand Strike must succeed at a Fortitude save against the lich's spell DC - 4. The creature becomes paralyzed for 1 round on a failure. On a critical failure, the creature is paralyzed permanently, falls prone, and seems dead. A DC 25 Medicine check reveals the victim is alive.

Chapter 4: Phylacteries

WHAT IS A PHYLACTERY?

A phylactery is the vessel for a lich's soul that regenerates the body of the lich. Its most common form is that of a sealed metal box containing strips of parchment on which magical phrases have been transcribed, but it can be any item with an interior space in which sigils of binding/immortality/naming/dark magic can be inscribed. Rings, gems, and jewelry are common choices as well but they can be far weirder and more wonderful, as described in the following section.

VARIANT PHYLACTERIES

The following are variant ideas for phylacteries. If a given concept makes the ritual to become a lich harder (or easier) it will be described in the "Ritual DC" section. This increases (or decreases) all skill check DCs associated with the ritual that turns you into a lich. Please note that any listings of "inspirations" are thematic and may not 100% fit the concept.

ABSTRACT CONCEPTS AS PHYLACTERIES

The most esoteric and dramatic version of a phylactery is to make it something intangible or non-physical. For example, a lich might make their phylactery an era of time; being famous/remembered; the soul of an immortal compatriot; the rule of law in a specific kingdom; the blood of a dynasty; being feared; or even something like "the sun's supremacy". As these things cannot *physically* be destroyed, the act of killing a lich with one of these phylacteries becomes a far more dramatic endeavor. In our example where a lich's phylactery is "the sun's supremacy", a solar eclipse might be the only time they can be destroyed. Alternately, in the example where a blood dynasty is their phylactery you'd have to kill all members of a specific bloodline, or perhaps "end" the dynasty by making it impossible for them to continue ruling with a powerful curse. While not a lich in the strictest sense, a good example of something like this in fiction is the Witch King of Angmar, who could not be killed by any man, and was thus killed by a woman. It's that kind of thinking that must be employed to kill a lich whose phylactery is of this nature. When such a lich reforms

their body, they do so in a place thematically linked to their phylactery rather than at a physical location.

Inspirations: Witch King of Angmar (Lord of the Rings), Macbeth (Macbeth), Freddy Krueger (Nightmare on Elm Street)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ritual DC: +4

ANIMALS/FAMILIARS AS PHYLACTERIES

The notion of a “living phylactery” is an interesting one as it means that a lich’s immortality is contingent on the survival of that creature. This can lead to the creature receiving some sort of agelessness as part of the ritual (i.e., they can only be killed by traumatic injury/starvation). This is circumvented in the case where a phylactery is created from a wizard’s familiar, which is actually an extension of their soul and not truly a living creature. Being a living animal gives the phylactery the ability to move, hide, and determine the best way to remain unharmed - something that their lich master aids with their own skills and spells. A lich may even empower such a creature, turning it into a threat in its own right; a lich with the heart of an elder dragon as a phylactery is a good deal harder to put down for good than one with a simple metal box. Creating such a phylactery involves the willingness of the vessel the lich wishes to use, and the ritual can be complicated if the creature’s own soul is particularly strong.

Inspirations: Nagini (Harry Potter), Koschei the Immortal (Russian Mythology), Black Dogs (Mythology)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

Empathetic Link: If the animal did not have an emotional or mental connection with the lich prior to the ritual, they develop one. This link allows them to sense the emotions that the other is feeling at any distance (even across planes) in real time. While within 60 feet of each other they can sense each other’s surface thoughts.

GOALS, MISSIONS, OR OATHS AS PHYLACTERIES

Some lichs bind their soul to a singular goal, forcing themselves to stay alive until they can see their goal completed. These might include extracting revenge on a particular noble family by killing all its heirs, returning a sacred relic to a particular ancient temple, or toppling a specific hated empire. Liches with such phylacteries are compelled with inhuman fervor to see their oaths fulfilled, often going to absurd lengths and ignoring the consequences that are heaped onto others. When they rejuvenate they do so at a place pivotal to their oath or, perhaps, where they first swore that oath. Interestingly, the completion of the oath will in fact destroy the lich, as their purpose leaves them, taking their soul along with it.

When creating an oath-bound lich, the common term for lichs with this type of phylactery, it is important to consider the exact nature of the lich’s oath. Generally speaking, you want an oath that has a definite end state and can provide clear motivation. Create an oath that for one reason or another the players wouldn’t want to see completed, such as an oath that would threaten a family member or loved one. You want to avoid open-ended oaths with no end state, since that creates a lich that is technically unkillable (outside particularly inventive players).

Inspirations: Ghost Rider (Marvel), Revenants (Dungeons and Dragons)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

An oath-bound lich rejuvenates at a location they designate, defaulting to the location they swore their oath.

Additionally, oath-bound lichs gain the following weaknesses

Oath Fulfilled

When the lich’s oath is completed, be it by its own hand or by another, the lich is immediately reduced to 0 hp and is destroyed. It does not rejuvenate.

Only The Mission

The lich is compelled at all times, as by a permanent *geas/quest*, to complete their oath.

GODS HOLDING PHYLACTERIES

A lich's phylactery can sometimes be held by a god, which is both a blessing and a curse. It means that their phylactery is protected by one of the most powerful beings in existence but it also means that said being could just as easily destroy it on a whim. This most commonly occurs when an evil god makes a lich out of a cleric or blackguard (aka an anti-paladin) who is loyal to them but can also occur when a powerful evil spellcaster seeks the aid of a god in turning into a lich. This gives the deity control over the newly minted lich by virtue of the Sword of Damocles that is hanging over their head. If a god holds onto the phylactery of a lich they likely have a connection with that deity, antagonistic or otherwise, and this can set the stage for dramatic tension between them as the lich will often try to find ways of getting themselves out from under the control of their divine master. Additionally, since the phylactery is held by another it can be given away should someone make a sufficient offer.

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

Liches whose phylacteries are held by a deity will rejuvenate at a temple, shrine, or other place of worship dedicated to said deity. Alternatively, the deity may choose to have the lich rejuvenate within their domain, and then send them back to the mortal plane.

Ritual DC: -2

MULTIPLE PHYLACTERIES

A house divided against itself cannot stand, or so cowards would have you believe. Some liches choose to divide their soul among multiple phylacteries, planting pieces of their soul in separate objects/animals. This has advantages and drawbacks that a lich has to consider. On the one hand with so many phylacteries it will take a very dedicated group of adventurers to track down each one to completely kill the lich. Destroying one phylactery is unlikely to kill the lich but it may injure or temporarily incapacitate them. On the other hand, dividing the soul weakens its power and thus has the potential to weaken the lich in the process, at least until they are fully respawned from each one and reunited with their missing soul fragments. In addition, the lich has to keep careful track of all their phylacteries, or at least make sure they're well-hidden, to avoid accidental or purposeful destruction of the shards of their soul.

Inspirations: Lord Voldemort (Harry Potter), Koschei the Immortal (Russian Mythology)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

When destroyed, a lich with multiple phylacteries can choose to rejuvenate at any of their remaining phylacteries. A lich may make multiple phylacteries but each one that gets destroyed imposes a 2 permanent negative levels on them. The lich is, specifically, not immune to the effect of these negative levels. A lich may never have a number of phylacteries greater than half their character level or HD, whichever is less.

Ritual DC: +2 per phylactery

PEOPLE AS PHYLACTERIES

Although it is considered not only ethically unsound but dangerous, a lich may choose to make their phylactery a sentient being. Storing one's soul in a person is a difficult task that requires great skill yet presents some obvious challenges. The consent of the vessel is a major aspect of this; the relationship between the lich and their vessel can be a contentious (and dramatic) issue. If the vessel is willing, they may act as a servant to the lich in exchange for this dubious honor, or alternately may serve the lich out of fear of what will happen if they refuse. An unwilling vessel may be hunted by the lich if they run, or even be completely unaware of what they have become. It will undoubtedly be more difficult to destroy a person serving as a phylactery, as characters of any alignment would be able to present reasons for their survival, be it to threaten the lich, use the phylactery as a pawn, or simply out of respect for the rights of the phylactery.

Another common variant on this is called "reliant immortality" where one is immortal so long as something else exists. In this case, a lich who makes another person their phylactery is often tied to that person's own continued existence. This can be done out of misplaced love or devotion, out of spite (the only way for your rival to kill you is to kill themselves or a loved one), or as a means of assuring their own survival by binding to an already powerful creature/god.

Inspirations: Lord Voldemort (Harry Potter), Orochimaru (Naruto)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

A lich rejuvenates near, or out of, the flesh of the person they are linked to.

Empathetic Link: If the person did not have an emotional or mental connection with the lich prior to the ritual, they develop one. This link allows them to sense the emotions that the other is feeling at any distance (even across planes) in real time. While within 60 feet of each other they can sense each other's surface thoughts.

Ritual DC: +2

PLACES AS PHYLACTERIES

Some liches bind their soul into a structure, mixing their essence into wood and stone to define a place as their own. These are places that hold a special value to the lich, or are ancestral lands they held in life. By permeating their soul into a place, they create an aura of unholy desecration that corrupts the surrounding area with undead energies. There is always a well-guarded center that serves as the lich's sanctum and holds together the energies that maintain their realm, a secure place for the lich to rejuvenate after a defeat and plot their schemes.

Despite the fact that without siege engines or powerful magic it is difficult to destroy things like towers and castles, liches that use a structure as their phylactery have an Achilles' heel. Should their realm be consecrated (via the spell *consecrate*), the lich will be unable to rejuvenate. This is different from being killed; it simply delays the lich's return, trapping their soul between unlife and true death.

Should the lich's sanctum be re-desecrated (via a *desecrate* spell), the lich will return. Because of this weakness, many liches employ servants to keep the unholy aura secure in their sanctum.

Inspirations: Quartermain (League of Extraordinary Gentlemen), Zagreus (Hades), Dracula (Castlevania)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

If the area of the lich's sanctum is consecrated, the lich delays rejuvenating until the area is re-desecrated.

Ritual DC: +2

REVERSE PHYLACTERIES

Some liches hide their phylacteries not to protect their hidden soul, but because the mere proximity of the phylactery weakens them. Perhaps the phylactery reminds them of the life and love they gave up to obtain immortality, it hides the humanity they shed to gain power, or perhaps it holds all the pain they would have felt since becoming a lich. Regardless of

why they shun it, liches with such a cursed phylactery can only be killed while in the presence of or wearing their phylactery. Because they still rejuvenate from their phylactery, being killed holds a special dread to liches with a reverse phylactery, since it places them in a position of extreme weakness. The existence of reverse phylacteries isn't properly understood, but since it acts as an inversion of the normal function of a phylactery it is assumed to be a magical mistake in the creation of the phylactery, or a cruel twist placed within the ritual of lichdom.



*Lich Lord Z'dar
and his Husband/
Phylactery Omar*

When making a lich with a reverse phylactery, consider how the lich will react to the sight of their phylactery. Will they draw back in horror, since this thing can kill them? Will they begin to act more 'human', reacting to their lost soul? Consider the narrative behind the lich, and use that to determine how the lich will react.

Inspirations: Dorian Gray (The Picture of Dorian Gray), The Night King (Game of Thrones), Davy Jones (Pirates of the Caribbean)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

Liches with a reverse phylactery do not rejuvenate when killed while wearing their phylactery (if it takes the form of a worn item) or while within 30 feet of their phylactery.

Ritual DC: -2

SIZE-SCALING PHYLACTERIES

Traditionally, the size of a lich has no correlation to the size of their phylactery; the phylactery of a giant is the same size as the phylactery of a gnome. However, it can be entertaining to consider that larger liches require larger vessels to hide their soul away inside. In this case, assume that creatures medium or smaller require fine or diminutive phylacteries (amulets, rings, jewel boxes, etc). For every size above medium the lich's base creature is, the size of their phylactery grows one size as well, to a maximum of a large-sized phylactery for colossal (or larger) sized creatures.

This variant phylactery can be combined with the multiple phylactery option. In this case, each division of the phylactery reduces the required size of the phylacteries by one step (minimum of diminutive). For exceptionally large liches, like dragons, this is a popular option since it makes it easier to hide their soul; tracking down 16 amulets is a lot harder than finding a single armoire being used as a phylactery.

TECHNOLOGICAL PHYLACTERIES

If a setting involves alchemy, magitech or a higher degree of scientific development than the Middle Ages, liches may exploit technology to make powerful phylacteries that are quite difficult to kill. Many stories of a mad scientist putting their brain in a construct or other vessel are reminiscent of liches putting their soul into a phylactery and a "brain in a jar" may very well be an appropriate vessel for a psychic lich who controls their physical form from afar. Golems, magic bullets, or even things like giant airships are possible technological phylacteries and something like a stick of dynamite with an ever-growing wick might create an apt metaphor for a lich's doomed existence. A technological phylactery might actually be a life-sustaining thing like an iron lung or suit of magitech armor that drains life from those sacrificed to it. In science-fantasy settings a lich's phylactery might be a virus or other sort of program and the lich can only be killed if all copies of it are destroyed.

Inspirations: Dr. Gero (Dragon Ball Z), Necrons (Warhammer 40k)

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

Liches rejuvenate as per normal in most instances of a lich with a technological phylactery but if their phylactery is a program, they spawn out of a computer such a thing is installed on. If it is a life support vessel that is physically on them, their rejuvenation is much quicker (see the "Instant Rejuvenation" ability for the lychwright for an example of how to do this).

Ritual DC: +2

DEALING WITH PHYLACTERIES

One of the biggest problems with liches is the fact that they rejuvenate, meaning that "killing" the lich normally isn't the end of the affair. If the party can't track down and destroy the phylactery, they will have to fight the lich over and over. But sometimes destroying the phylactery isn't a viable option. Perhaps the lich has cleverly made their phylactery a plot-relevant item, or made it out of adamantine.

In the event the lich has a phylactery that can't be destroyed, here are a few ways that players can keep a lich from coming back right away.

Destroy the Rejuvenating Body This is the most obvious way to deal with a lich whose phylactery can't be destroyed. This means there is a daily chore of destroying the partially-reconstructed body of the lich.

Holy Water Suspension If the lich uses a smaller phylactery, it is possible to dunk the phylactery into holy water and leave it there. It is important to monitor the suspension to ensure the phylactery doesn't corrupt the holy water.

Soul Trap At high levels, certain spells can be used to delay the return of a lich. Spells like *trap the soul* and *soul bind* can keep a lich from returning to their phylactery.

Off-Plane Containment If the party has the means to create their own demiplanes, they can try to create a plane where time doesn't pass, though is likely to revive once brought back onto the mortal plane. If they can't create their own plane, the Astral Plane can serve as a place to keep the phylactery. Just be sure not to lose track of the phylactery.

Antimagic If all else fails, holding a lich's phylactery inside an *antimagic field* keeps it from rejuvenating, since the rejuvenation is a supernatural ability.

Chapter 5: Variant Liches

This chapter presents a number of variant liches. These represent a different path to the same sort of power and are mostly a reflection of your class, profession, or means by which you achieved lichdom. All the paths to lichdom result in the same, or at least similar, powers. Any of the following creatures count as "liches" for the purpose of spells and effects and, except where specified, follow the same path to lichdom as a standard lich.

ALCHEMICAL LICH

With necromantic ichor dribbling down its chin and a multitude of tubes pumping life-sustaining juices into its body by way of flesh-valves and injectors, an alchemical lich is science's attempt to sustain life beyond its mortal limit. While immortals sustain themselves by some god-given means (such as the peaches of immortality or ambrosia) an alchemical lich is one who artificially animates their corpse through dark, necromantic, forbidden science.

Using profane science, alchemical liches create a "black box" for their consciousness that serves as an anchor for their soul to retain on the mortal plane after their death. This mechanical soul-trap keeps them anchored to their preserved physical form, though it is often dessicated and hideous, resembling nothing so much as a mummy or corpse preserved by cold climates. In this way they are often considered similar to things like flesh-golems with a will of their own and the capacity for alchemical science.

An alchemical lich is mechanically unique in three ways. The first is that they have an alchemist's formula and chemical know-how rather than a mage's raw magical might. Secondly, they can transfer their consciousness to another being's body. Their third trait is that their fleshy confines often are such an affront to the natural order of things that they will almost resist their master's consciousness. It has been likened by some to a body that simply wants to rest, being forced to stay awake indefinitely on chemical stimulants; they are conscious, but it is a grim parody of true wakefulness.

Inspirations: Karl Ruprect Kroenen (Hellboy), Frankenstein's Monster (Frankenstein), The God-Emperor (Warhammer 40K), Mr. Freeze (Batman), Redmond and Blutarch Mann (Team Fortress 2)

EXAMPLE ALCHEMICAL LICH

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few alchemical liches:

Greyfox the Nightmare Hog: Greyfox is a dwarven crime boss who developed some of the most powerful narcotics in the world. He used his mastery of alchemy to super-charge his own body and the bodies of his gang members. When they died he just reanimated them and used them for more dangerous heists until nothing remained. He eventually sold his soul to Davosh, the Dark King of the Forest, in exchange for the prized Black Illicor of Eternal Undeath. He used it to fashion himself into an alchemical half-boar half-dwarven lich thanks to his dark patron's curse.

Alofang Skybane Alofang was an elven queen and powerful archmage who was seduced by the influence of the *Tears of Shaminra*, a magic-enhancing herbalist compound. She grew so addicted that she forsook her kingdom to cultivate her herbalist talents to the level where she could produce it internally, though at the cost of her life. She now exists as a walking, eternally rotting, plague-ridden treant that drains the life from the living so she can distill their joy and drink it.

PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION

The following is a modification of the normal lich template:

Non-Healing

An alchemical lich cannot be healed by anything other than their own natural rejuvenation.

Black Box Phylactery

An alchemical lich's phylactery is made to be near indestructible. This "black box" stores its consciousness and it must be destroyed to kill an alchemical lich. It is a dense cube made of an unknown, miraculous metal created by infusing their soul into adamantine. It has 700 hit points and 30 hardness. If an alchemical lich is destroyed it will possess any corpse or unintelligent undead within 120 feet of it automatically at the start of its next turn, the cube teleporting into the heart of the creature. This causes the creature to become the lich (rather than retain any abilities it had). A lich cannot possess a creature whose CR is in excess of their own in this fashion. This cube, on its own, can fly at a speed of 60 feet with perfect maneuverability.

PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION

The following is a modification of the normal lich template:

Spellcasting Increase the spellcaster's level by 1 and change its statistics as follows. Increase spell DCs and spell attack roll by 2.

Darkvision

Saving Throws +1 status bonus to all saves vs. positive
Positive Damage An alchemical lich is hurt by positive rather than being healed by it. Unlike other undead it is NOT healed by negative. The only way an alchemical lich can be healed is when it rejuvenates.

Black Box Phylactery Rejuvenation (arcane, alchemical, necromancy) An alchemical lich is sustained by a black cube in its chest. When a lich is destroyed, its soul

immediately transfers to any corpse or unintelligent undead within 120 feet of it automatically at the start of its next turn so long as the black box can reach them. This causes the creature to become the lich (rather than retain any abilities it had). A lich cannot possess a creature whose CR is in excess of their own in this fashion. This cube, on its own, can fly at a speed of 60 feet. The black box has 600 hit points and 30 hardness.

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Resistances cold 20, physical 15 (except magic bludgeoning)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 60 feet, DC 30

Hand of the Lich All liches have a hand unarmed attack that deals 1d8 negative damage for every 3 levels and inflicts a paralyzing touch. This attack has the finesse trait.

Paralyzing Touch (arcane, curse, incapacitation, necromancy) A creature damaged by the lich's hand Strike must succeed at a Fortitude save against the lich's spell DC - 4. The creature becomes paralyzed for 1 round on a failure. On a critical failure, the creature is paralyzed permanently, falls prone, and seems dead. A DC 25 Medicine check reveals the victim is alive.



Iron Lich Levora

BARDIC LICH

Music has the power to change hearts and minds, to transport listeners back in time, and to keep the memory of a person alive long after their death. This is never more literally true than for bardic lichs. A bardic lich has mastered the art of keeping stories, and memories, alive through song, and uses this power to cheat death. As long as their music is performed by the living, they too will live on.

The bardic lich selects a “chosen song” to tie their memory to, and is compelled to perform this song regularly. This has the added benefit of keeping it in the popular consciousness even after the lich’s “death”. This performance is tied to the lich’s very existence, serving as their phylactery. The more people perform their song, the stronger the lich becomes. To defeat it, one must either make the song so displeasing as to taint it in the minds of listeners, trick the bardic lich into willingly saying the name of their song backwards, or defeat the lich in a contest of musical skill.

Inspirations: Mari Lwyd (Welsh mythology), Ember McLain (Danny Phantom), The Devil (The Devil Went Down to Georgia), Brook (One Piece)

Other Names: Skull Skald, The Unliving Song, The Decomposer, Muse Mummy, The Eternal Sonata

EXAMPLE BARDIC LICHES

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few bardic lichs:

Hajmina of the Lost Name: There once was a famed actress beloved for her starring role as an *ingenue* (a naive young beauty) named “Hajmina”. Her mastery of the role was so perfect that nobody could separate the two; her true name has been lost to history, and she is remembered only by her star performance. As her beauty faded, she turned to dark arts to hold onto the spotlight. Now she haunts the theatre she once performed in, unable to take the stage but unwilling to let go. She tutors starlets from the shadows, demanding their perfection in return for her benign oversight.

Kimlash the Warsong: Kimlash is a wicked orcish chieftain and skald that commands a horde of living and undead warriors. Originally a rallying figure for several clans, Kimlash gathered warring tribes together into a single fighting force to be thrown against civilized lands. Mortally wounded in a moment of triumph, shamans worked to revive their leader to guide them

again towards ever greater glory. The Warsong has bound his soul to his warcry, a mighty call-and-return battle-ballad that he uses to drive his followers into a blind rage.

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

This sort of lich has very little to change other than perhaps swapping one of their skills for one that allows them to perform the song or retell the story they are tied to. The only dramatic change is that when a bardic lich is killed, they rejuvenate in a place where their song or story is being performed. If the song is not currently being performed their soul exists in limbo and they take 1 negative level each day until they reach 0, at which point they die forever. However, if at any point during their time in limbo someone performs their song or retells their story in full, they begin to rejuvenate.

Another way to destroy a bardic lich is to trick them into performing their song incorrectly or saying the title of their song/story backwards. This perversion of the song or story corrupts the link that binds the lich’s soul to it. Upon doing so they lose the ability to rejuvenate for 1 month. The bardic lich must say the words willingly, but does not need to be aware of the relevance or context of the words.

Finally, you can destroy a bardic lich in a music contest. This is a series of 3 opposed Perform (or other related skills) checks performed over 1 minute, and the one who wins the most wins the contest. Both the character opposing them and the lich must play the same song and the lich gets a +4 bonus on such rolls because of how familiar they are with it. If the player wins, the lich loses their ability to rejuvenate for 1 month; and if the player loses, they take negative levels equal to half their character level for 1 week. A bardic lich knows the danger of doing this and will not take on people they believe can beat them. (A good plan is to pretend to be an amateur and then surprise the lich.)

A GM may decide to have any or all of these weaknesses and may freely exempt certain ones from their bardic lich if they wish.

DIVINE LICH

Clerics and other divine characters who worship a god can be turned into a lich by their deity so that they might serve them beyond death. This is a common reward among the followers of evil deities, deities of magic, and powerful undead lords. In many ways this can be likened to being made into an avatar of such a deity and in all cases the deity both aids the lich in achieving lichdom and holds onto their phylactery. This compels them to serve the deity, even if they do not wish to, and can even be a way for a deity to corrupt the faithful of another god by turning their champion into a lich against their will.

A rarer, but no less powerful, form of this lich is the druidic lich. Breaking the natural cycle of life and death is heretical to many nature-worshipping druids but those who fall from grace often seek the power to survive beyond death. Such druidic liches will take on frightful appearances like that of great trees, creeping moss-beings, or savage animals.

Less commonly rangers and blackguards/anti-paladins can be made into liches, though they generally lack the magical power to achieve their dark transformation on their own. As such many will receive the blessings of an evil patron deity, demon, or predatory spirit that wishes to continue to have the service of a ranger or druid after death. Unless they are particularly skilled at magic it is unlikely they will become a divine lich, but instead another powerful form of undead like a mummy, powerful ghoul, vampire, or even a wendigo.

EXAMPLE DIVINE LICHES

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few divine liches:

The Radiant Body: A figurehead of a group of sun god worshipers. Originally an insanely popular religious leader, The Radiant Body was responsible for a massive amount of people converting to their faith with their raw charisma. This being has been propped up as proof of their gods power for so long that any evidence of who they were before they became an undying avatar of their god has been lost or erased by the church. There is evidence to suggest that this vain being is being as



*Bishop Valafar,
Apostate of Helicon*

manipulated by its church as much as it manipulates for said church. The being is rarely seen except on big public spectacles where they are adorned in heavy robes and an androgenous white mask and constant magical light enveloping them.

Fen, the Cursewood Guardian: Fen was a druid who, during his travels, came upon an entire forest which had been cursed. The magic was too powerful to dispel even with the assistance of multiple druids, and the source of the evil was untraceable even by the best rangers. Fen began living in the forest full-time, hoping to understand the dark magic which entangled it. Eventually his isolation and prolonged study drove him to madness, but he did find the dark god which had made the forest its home ... and in exchange for the knowledge of its dark magic, it made Fen the forest's accursed protector. He appears to adventurers as a decaying body cloaked in leaves, with skin blackened by dirt and eyes the color of the sky.

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

Divine lichs use the Gods Holding Phylactery variant phylactery. Their spells are divine (or primal, in the case of Pathfinder 2 druidic lichs), they become spontaneous casters, and their list of spells will need to be adjusted (though simply having a "divine version" or "primal version" of a given spell is fine too).

HIVE LICH

A hive lich is a composite being, conglomerated around a single soul. This collective consciousness is distributed across its many undead bodies that rot from within as they are used for the will of the many before they are callously discarded. Hive lichs are rare and it takes a particularly powerful spellcaster with a charismatic soul to recruit enough other beings to create it. Hive lichs form from cults of personality dedicated to a powerful spellcaster, corrupt religious orders, or from spellcasters from races that are heavily social (like colony insects).

A hive lich's creation ritual requires the sacrifice of at least 100 living humanoid creatures to create its initial hive lich. The lich itself dominates all the souls within its influence, consuming those that join it and having direct control over each undead husk that shambles under its influence.

The lich itself has its body destroyed in the process of creating the hive and it exists as a mental puppet master controlling all the bodies under its sway. To destroy a hive lich one must kill every body it possesses as each functions as its own, small, weak phylactery. A new creature is added to the hive when it is killed by a member of the hive and a brief ritual is performed. The lich themselves can jump into any body under their sway (as a swift action) and that undead gains the powerful spellcasting abilities that the lich had in life, with the previous body losing the same powers.

Inspirations: The Borg (Star Trek), Unity (Rick and Morty), The Night King (Game of Thrones), Legion/PZ (Ex-Heroes)

EXAMPLE HIVE LICHES

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few hive lichs:

Granny Gertrude and The Lost Children: Once a lovable witch matron of a relatively harmless coven long ago, Granny Gertrude struggled with her failing body and mind. Worried that her coven would be lost without her, she started to study darker and darker arts, even convening with patrons outside her coven to look for answers. In the end she convinced her coven to participate in a ritual she found, which ended up turning her into a lich and converting her small coven into involuntary undead. Now she spends eternity claiming new soldiers into her army in order to "protect" what's left of her coven. Completely mad and convinced that they are still alive, she puppeteers her mindless coven into acting out their daily lives around her. She will acquire as many undead as she feels she needs to make sure her family is safe.

Veska the Verminlord: Nobody ever thinks of just how many bugs are killed each day. Veska was a necromancer who realized the potential in this and began to create undead insects out of the husks of dead ants, squashed cockroaches, and dead beetles. Soon he had an uncountable number of necrotic insect swarms at his command and terrorized the lands he inhabited. It was not long until he molted from his human form, becoming a horrific insect-like lich that has its drones bring it things like victims and treasure.

MECHANICAL IMPLICATIONS

THE HIVE LICH ITSELF

A “hive-lich” is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature with 5 or more Hit Dice (referred to hereafter as the base creature). Most were once humanoids. A hive-lich is a disembodied spirit who exists simply as a spirit, retaining all of its spellcasting abilities, skills, and mental abilities scores (the rest is dependent on the body it is currently inhabiting).

Pathfinder 1st Edition: A hive lich can have 25 HD of mindless undead under its control per HD it has at a given time. No undead may have more HD than half the lich's own total HD.

Pathfinder 2nd Edition: A hive lich can have 25 CR of mindless undead under its control per CR it has at a given time. No undead may have more CR than half the lich's own total CR.

CR: +2

Special Abilities:

Hive Mind (Ex)

The hive lich can communicate with all component undead under their sway within 50 miles. If at least one component dead is aware of a particular danger, the hive lich is aware of that danger. If one component undead in the hive is not flat-footed, the hive lich is not either against that threat. The hive lich is not considered flanked by a given threat unless all undead in a hive are flanked.

Join the Hive (Ex)

Any creature slain by a hive lich can be converted to a component undead if the hive lich takes 1 minute to perform a simple ritual to link their soul to the hive. This acts as a *create undead* spell using the lich's caster level.

Presence of the Master

The hive lich themselves can jump into the body of any component undead in the hive as a full round action. When it is possessed the component undead gains:

- **Spellcasting:** All spellcasting abilities of the hive lich.
- **Ability Scores:** All mental ability scores of the hive lich.

COMPONENT UNDEAD

All undead under the hive lich's sway, known as component undead, gain the following traits:

CR: +1

Special Abilities:

Hive Mind (Ex)

All component undead within 50 miles of the hive lich are in constant communication with it and each other. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are aware of that danger. If one in the hive is not flat-footed against a given threat, none of them are. No component undead in a hive is considered flanked by a given threat unless all undead in a hive are flanked.

Join the Hive (Ex)

Any creature slain by a component undead can be converted to a component undead if the hive lich takes 1 minute to perform a simple ritual to link their soul to the hive. This acts as a *create undead* spell using the lich's caster level.

Possessed By the Lich

The hive lich themselves can jump into the body of any component undead in the hive as a full round action. When it is possessed the component undead gains:

- **Spellcasting:** All spellcasting abilities of the hive lich.
- **Ability Scores:** All mental ability scores of the hive lich.

INTELLIGENT ITEM LICH

Some lichs forsake their original mortal bodies altogether, choosing to dwell entirely within their phylacteries. To dissuade others from destroying their fragile housing, they forge their phylacteries directly into powerful magic items like swords, armor, and enchanted jewelry. When an unassuming host picks up their phylactery, the lich attempts to possess them and use them as a puppet to enact their plans and schemes.

Inspirations: The One Ring (LotR), Blue Beetle (Young Justice), Skullheart (Skullgirls), Soul Edge (Soul Calibur series)

EXAMPLE INTELLIGENT ITEM LICHES

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few item lichs:

Balefork the Gluttonous: In life Robert Balefork was a powerful necromancer with an unending cannibalistic appetite. In undeath his patron, the dark fey Queen Yidris, played a trick on him and chose to make an ornate fork the form in which he'd spend eternity. His hunger gnaws at him and he can only satisfy it by causing those who hold him to consume living flesh with him. He promises them great power, often masquerades as a wand, hides in cutlery drawers, and only reveals his true form when absolutely necessary (as he is ashamed of it).

The Sword of the False King: Many legends speak of a sword that can determine the next king. The Sword of the False King is a lich who was, in life, a powerful and scheming advisor to a just king. He took the form of a beautiful and gallant-looking sword that, when drawn, allows the lich inside to whisper insidious lies to the wielder. The lich within is a brilliant politician, advisor, and schemer but they are ultimately out to ruin any king out of spite towards one they hated long ago. When not fooling a king it summons a powerful undead to wield it and uses its powerful spellcasting to level cities that oppose its draconian rule.

PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION

For Pathfinder 1 this makes the lich into an intelligent cursed item. For rules on intelligent items see chapter 15 of the Pathfinder Core Rulebook. Unlike other intelligent items, they can possess anyone who touches, wields, equips, or otherwise makes use of them. Lich items always have a large ego score and retain the ability to cast spells that they had in life.

PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION

For Pathfinder 2, the lich functions as normal but loses the Drain Phylactery ability. Instead, their phylactery takes the form of a magic item with the following curse.

LICHCURSED ITEM

Lichcursed items attempt to overpower their wielders, eventually killing the host and transforming their flesh into a new body for the lich to possess. Removing the curse allows a character to discard the item, but if it ever uses the item again, the curse returns. If the user dies from another cause while using the item, or if the

lich's rejuvenation completes before the user dies from the curse, the user immediately progresses to stage 3.

Lichcurse (arcane, curse, necromancy) This curse affects anyone who wears or wields a lichcursed item for at least 1 hour. **Saving Throw** Will save; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** doomed 1 and cannot or drop remove the item (1 day); **Stage 2** doomed 2, and cannot remove or drop the item (1 day); **Stage 3** dies and transforms into the item's lich.

LYCHWRIGHT

*An act of creation to bring about my destruction,
An act of destruction to bring about my creation,
By my life, my curse, and my muse,
Death and life eternal do I choose.*

Lychwrights are lichs who gave up their soul not for magic, but for continued artisanal skill and all the time in the world to use it. They are fell smiths who forged their own mighty phylacteries into cursed masterpieces - works that become not only the container for their soul but part of their earthly form. The ritual that creates a lychwright is an arduous one and comes with a condition, a curse known as the "Maker's Unmaking". It goes: "all your craft will be fell and all your doings will be like ash upon your tongue".

The ritual for the creation of a lychwright literally involves them working themselves to death on a cursed object. The very act of creation drains the life from the creator; the crafting of a magical object becomes an all-consuming obsession that causes their body to deteriorate until the craftsman dies and their soul infuses the item they were crafting and finishes it. The blighted form they had before death is what they are eternally cursed with, a raggedy body with skeletal features. Nonetheless, the creature is as physically strong and dexterous as it was in life if not more so. As many prospective lychwrights do not possess the magical power required to perform the complex ritual required for the transition they are aided by those who do. Many seek out evil cults, dark gods, or powerful necromancers who transform them into the immortal warriors they wish to become. There is always a price attached to such an aid and because of this, lychwrights usually have a weakness in the form of an unbreakable oath to those who made them.

Immediately upon their rebirth lychwrights are driven to create; they find a new hunger for the act of creation spurred on by the act of destruction. For the first hundred years they will feverishly work to produce wonders with their new skill but their hunger for creation will lead to them jumping from project to project without ever finishing a single one. In time they will learn to control their unrestrained urges and can channel them into long-term projects.

Lychwrights suffer from a curse known as the Maker's Unmaking: "All your craft will be fell and all your doings will be like ash upon your tongue". This is generally taken to mean that everything a lychwright crafts will be cursed and will eventually turn to ash. The curses they imbue upon those who use what a lychwright crafts will, at first, be generic and weak - unshaped by the hands of the lychwright. In time a lychwright's cursecraft will grow in skill and complexity and they can shape the curses to suit their needs. To start, a cursed helmet might simply give the wielder ill-defined bad luck. However, in the hands of an ancient lychwright, the helm can make the wearer see foe as friend when the lychwright desires it, or perhaps make the wearer susceptible to the lychwright's commands. The second part is something of a misnomer; while everything a lychwright will *eventually* turn to ash, it may take the normal amount of time. In long eons even metal may be reduced to ash and even adamantite will someday falter given time. The wording of this part of the curse is important. This is more a reference to the fact that, as immortal beings, they will (potentially) outlive all their creations and they will eventually feel empty. There is a second reading of this second part as it specifies that things a lychwright creates will be "as ash upon your tongue" and actually means that things it creates will be its greatest downfall.

Unlike other lichs, a lychwright is physically linked to their phylactery, as it is part of them. A lychwright that forges a ring must always wear it, a smith lychwright must always wear the armor it forged (as it is likely fused to its body), and a ghastly lychwright wearing a wedding dress of its own design is nothing more than an extension of the dress itself. In a very real sense the lychwright **is** the item they created and the physical form is just something grown by the phylactery to allow it to interact with the physical world.

Like traditional lichs, lychwrights are immortal and if "killed" will reform wherever their phylactery is held. Unlike lichs who hide their phylacteries, a lychwright's masterwork will create a new body for them almost as soon as they are destroyed. Wiping them from existence is extremely difficult as their masterwork is protected by the most powerful and fell magics known to exist. The destruction of a lychwright's masterwork is a task which requires that it be destroyed by something they themselves created. While this may be a simple task if the lychwright is a master smith who only forges hammers, it may be quite a challenge indeed to destroy a lychwright who produces nothing but musical instruments or one who crafts confectioneries.

Keeping the object that contains their soul on them causes lychwrights to be more reclusive and risk-averse than their sorcerous counterparts. They work almost exclusively through intermediaries who they also retain to get materials and equipment for them in exchange for the right to sell some of what a lychwright crafts. Such individuals become immensely wealthy trading these items as lychwrights are some of the finest artisans in existence. Even the gods will sometimes seek ancient lychwrights for their help in the crafting of their equipment. Many wicked empires and cults of dark gods fill their coffers with coin earned by selling the works of their resident lychwright and those same organizations often wield the very equipment they craft, even knowing full well the curses upon them.

SIDEBAR: HOW DO YOU KILL A Lychwright Painter?

Some crafts, such as painting or calligraphy, may make it seem possible to kill a lychwright who specializes in them. The words of their curse are left vague so that players can get creative in how they destroy a lychwright's masterwork with an object of its own crafting. For example, a really poetic way for a painting lychwright to end would be if a person was driven to grief by a picture of the lychwright. If the grief caused that person to set fire to the gallery where the painting lychwright is hiding, that would qualify as meeting the criteria for the lychwright's destruction. It's also possible that something they "craft" could be taken to mean things they created like misery, distrust, undead, or even an offspring they had in life.

EXAMPLE LYCHWRIGHTS

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few lychwrights:

Destri the Dirgebane: Destri is a song. She composed an aria that is so hauntingly beautiful that all who hear it weep uncontrollably. When she was alive she alone could perform it without devolving into sobbing madness but now she uses her bardic spellcasting to compel creatures to continue to play her song until they die. She makes liberal use of the *geas* spell to achieve this and has hordes of undead playing her aria. If it were ever to be played backwards by a musician of profound talent upon a golden harp it is believed that she would shatter instantly.

Forgemaster Achtum: The dwarven smith Achtum of Gar'Vodel was famous the world over for his blades and armor. While adventuring the talented spellcaster uncovered the resting place of an ancient Drow matron and her famous golden blade, *Malvegil*. So perfect was this blade that he became obsessed with it and produced weapon after weapon to try to compete with its beauty. The effort killed him but in his madness he had crafted *Calmacil*, a sword that surpassed even *Malvegil*. Now he works eternally to protect his *Calmacil*, the keep he has built is so grand, so impregnable, and so confusing to navigate that dozens of adventurers have died in the attempt to rob him. At night he stays awake, his flesh rotten, as he beholds the serene beauty of his weapon and weeps - for he knows his greed has destroyed him but he has no power left in him to fight it.

PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION:

LYCHWRIGHT TEMPLATE (CR +2)

CR: Same as the base creature + 2.

Alignment: Any evil.

Type: The creature's type changes to undead. Do not recalculate BAB, saves, or skill ranks.

Senses: A lychwright gains darkvision 60 ft.

Armor Class: A lychwright has a +5 natural armor bonus or the base creature's natural armor bonus, whichever is better.

Hit Dice: Change all of the creature's racial Hit Dice to d8s. All Hit Dice derived from class levels remain unchanged. As undead, lychwrights use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points (instead of Constitution).

Defensive Abilities: A lychwright gains channel resistance +4, DR 15/bludgeoning and magic, and immunity to cold and electricity (in addition to those granted by its undead traits). The lychwright also gains the following defensive ability:

Instant Rejuvenation (Su)

When a lychwright is destroyed, its masterwork (which is part of its form and serves as their phylactery) immediately begins to rebuild the undead artisan's body. This process takes 1 minute - if the body is destroyed before that time passes, the masterwork merely starts the process anew. After this time passes, the lychwright awakens fully healed, usually with a burning need for revenge against those who previously destroyed it. A lychwright may elect to wait 5 minutes (or more) instead. If this option is taken upon death, the lychwright will spring fully formed from their masterwork rather than have their body form slowly. They can delay this process for as long as they wish - simply remaining as their masterwork.

Melee Attack: A lychwright has a touch attack that it can use once per round as a natural weapon. A lychwright fighting without weapons uses its natural weapons (if it has any) in addition to its touch attack (which is treated as a primary natural weapon that replaces one claw or slam attack, if the creature has any). A lychwright armed with a weapon uses its weapons normally, and can use its touch attack as a secondary natural weapon.

Damage: A lychwright's touch attack (which is weaker than its magical counterpart) uses negative energy to deal 1d4 points of damage to living creatures + 1 point of damage per 4 Hit Dice possessed by the lich. As negative energy, this damage can be used to heal undead creatures. A lychwright can take a full-round action to infuse itself with this energy, healing damage as if it had used its touch attack against itself.

Special Attacks: A lychwright gains the two special attacks described below. Save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 lich's HD + lich's Cha modifier unless otherwise noted.

Fear Aura (Su)

Creatures of less than 5 HD in a 60-foot radius that look at the lychwright must succeed on a Will save or become frightened. Creatures with 5 HD or more must succeed at a Will save or be shaken for a number of rounds equal to the lychwright's Hit Dice. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same lychwright's aura for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Ashen Touch (Su)

Lychwrights are cursed to turn all they touch to ash. With a concentrated effort they can make a primary touch attack that causes any object they touch to swiftly darken and turn to ash. The object touched takes half its maximum hp in damage and gains the broken condition; a second hit destroys the item. Against non-organic constructs a lychwright's touch deals 1d8 points of damage + 1 point of damage per 2 Hit Dice possessed by the lychwright. An attended object, any magic object, or constructs can attempt a Reflex save to negate this effect.

Abilities: Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +2. Being undead, a lich has no Constitution score.

Skills: Liches have a +8 racial bonus on Perception checks as well as all Craft and Profession checks. A lich always treats Climb, Craft (all), Disguise, Fly, Intimidate, Knowledge (engineering), Knowledge (religion), Perception, and Profession (all) as class skills. Otherwise, skills are the same as the base creature.

Cursed Crafting: All items a lychwright attempts to craft are cursed items.

THE LYCHWRIGHT'S MASTERWORK (AND PHYLACTERY)

An integral part of becoming a lychwright is the crafting of a cursed object that becomes the lychwright's phylactery and contains its soul. This is referred to as its masterwork. The only way to get rid of a lychwright for sure is to destroy its masterwork/phylactery with an object of the lychwright's own creation.

Each lychwright must create its own masterwork by crafting a magic item with craft DC of 30 or higher. The character must have at least 3 item creation feats and at least 11 ranks in a Craft skill. The masterwork/phylactery costs 120,000 gp to create and has hardness equal to 5 times the lychwright's ranks in their highest Craft at the time of crafting and hit points equal to 10 times the character's hit points at the time of creation (prior to their transformation). A masterwork reforms itself, healing hit points at a rate of 1 per minute (as the regeneration monster ability). A masterwork only gains the broken condition at 0 hit points and loses that condition if it has at least 1 hit point. This regeneration cannot heal any damage done by an object crafted by the lychwright. Objects crafted by the lychwright also ignore all hardness the object has. A lychwright may

repair this damage itself by mundane or magical means but if it is reduced to 0 hit points the object shattered and the lychwright is destroyed.

PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION: LYCHWRIGHT ALTERNATE ABILITIES

A lychwright loses the following abilities: Spellcasting, counterspell, paralyzing touch, Negative Healing Rejuvenation, and Drain Phylactery. The lychwright loses the paralyzing touch additional effect on their melee attack and replaces it with the ashen touch ability as described below.

Melee [one-action] hand +24 (finesse, magical), Damage 4d8 negative plus ashen touch.

Ashen Touch: Lychwrights are cursed to turn all they touch to ash. This deals 4d8 damage (doubled on a critical hit), ignoring hardness, to any one object worn or held by the creature they hit with their hand's melee attack. If a creature uses the Shield Block reaction against a hand attack, the shield is automatically broken, but no other item is affected by the attack.

Skills: A lychwright has a +34 bonus to their Crafting and gain a +28 bonus to Economic Lore but lose the listed Arcana and Religion skills of a typical lich.

Lychwright Masterwork Rejuvenation: When a lychwright is destroyed, its soul immediately transfers to its masterwork. 1d10 minutes later a lychwright springs fully formed from its masterwork, its body instantly forming around it. A lychwright can be permanently destroyed only if its masterwork is found and destroyed.

Cursed Crafting: All items a lychwright attempts to craft are cursed items.

LYCHWRIGHT MASTERWORK [ITEM 12]

Rare Arcane Necromancy Negative

Price 1,600 gp; **Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** —

This item is crafted by a fell artisan wishes to become a lychwright and counts as a phylactery. The ritual to make a lychwright involves an evil-aligned master artisan working so long and hard on an object that the exertion literally kills them. A masterwork is an object crafted by a character who is at least a Master in Crafting and (unlike a lich's phylactery) is physically part of their body. When a lychwright is destroyed, its soul immediately transfers to its masterwork. 1d10 minutes later a lychwright springs fully formed from

its masterwork, its body instantly forming around it, fully healed and in a new body. A lychwright can be permanently destroyed only if its masterwork is found and destroyed. A masterwork can only be damaged by an object crafted by the lychwright themselves. It has Hardness 9 and 36 HP.

MARTIAL LICH

The path to lichdom isn't exclusive to that of spellcasters alone. Some who walk the path are martial characters who obtain the benefits through various means. The most common form of martial lich is one created by an evil god (also making them, in part, divine liches), as a curse (as might result from an intelligent item lich), or by rituals or magic that they have employed others to do for them. Such characters are often called "grave wardens", "death knights", "lychknight", or "spectral duelists". Fighters, knights (cavaliers), and barbarians are the most common ones to obtain the vaunted status of a martial lich but others (rogues, spell-less rangers, gunslingers, etc.) find their way onto the path as well.

Martial liches have interesting phylacteries as their prowess and toughness afford them the ability to better defend them. The iconic phylactery of a martial lich is either a weapon or their armor but things like their keep/castle or a more traditional one is not unheard of. Martial liches take advantage of their phylactery's ability to rejuvenate them and keep it nearby so they can do so nearly instantly. While liches made from martial characters with some magical ability like blackguard/anti-paladins, rangers, hexblades, magi, etc may fall into this category, this section is primarily concerned with liches with superb martial skills and a lack of magic.

Inspirations: Arthas Menethil/The Lich King (Warcraft), Skull Knight (Berserk), Lord Soth (Dragonlance/Ravenloft), Nazgûl (Lord of the Rings)

EXAMPLE MARTIAL LICHES

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few martial liches:

The Lord of Champions: The Lord of Champions is an ancient lychknight whose phylactery is the "strongest warrior". This makes truly killing them difficult, since the only way to prove that one is the "strongest warrior" is to kill the current one. Upon the murder of the current strongest warrior the Lord of Champions

makes the murderer their new phylactery and grants them tremendous power. These powers are identical to that of a lich and are accompanied by the lich's favor. The true means of destroying the Lord of Champions is unknown as they can only be killed when their phylactery is as well and, as soon as it is destroyed, the one who destroys it becomes the new phylactery. This has, consequently, led many paladins and good-aligned fighters to unintentionally become the Lord of Champions' phylactery.

Martellus of The Endless Crusade: A knight from a bygone era, Martellus wages a one-man war against a notable religion. He claims the church worships a false idol, that their god is a powerful demon seeking to corrupt the land and not the benevolent figure the church presents. No evidence has been given to support his claim, but history shows the claim is identical to one the church faced in ages past; in its early days the church faced persecution from others and its members were hunted down. Despite numerous defeats, Martellus keeps coming back to attack the church, leading many to suspect he won't truly rest until his hated enemies are wiped out for good.

BANE KNIGHTS

A unique variant of a martial lich is the line of beings known as "Bane Knights". These are warriors of renown who have been cursed to lichdom by dark artifacts known as "Knight's Bane". These powerful weapons are the home to the souls of particularly strong demi-liches that take over the body of any warrior prideful enough to wield it. Some such warriors may even resist the attempts by the weapon to possess them, but only for a time. It is the fate of all that spill blood with a Knight's Bane will eventually succumb to death or possession. The weapons are some of the strongest in mortal hands and they always, but fate or design, fall into the possession of those who crave power. Once a Bane Knight has spilled blood with the weapon a pact is sealed with the lich's soul that resides in the weapon and the two are cursed to become as one. Wounds dealt to a Bane Knight do not heal but the lich within sustains their form until they have no more use for their host. This gives them a ragged, half decayed, appearance that eventually turns them into a full on lich. The most terrifying thing about a Bane Knight is that, as the demi-lich within their weapon assumes control, they eventually gain the spell-casting ability of the lich as well as their own tremendous martial skill.



*Night-Captain Furcas,
The Tempest of the Broken
Blade*

Knight's Bane (Cursed, Artifact)

[Pathfinder 1st Edition]

A Knight's Bane is a *+5 unholy longsword* (or other suitable weapon) that also causes the wielder to shift their creature type to undead. If the wielder is killed, they regrow from the weapon (as if they were a lich and the sword is their phylactery). Once you have dealt damage with this weapon a pact with the spirit of a demi-lich residing in the weapon has been struck. The weapon can never be willingly discarded, destroyed, or lost by the wielder. If it ever is, the wielder takes 1 negative level each week until it is recovered. Each week you must make a Will save (DC 30) or move one step towards a Chaotic Evil alignment. Creatures of Chaotic Evil alignment who fail 3 saves against this are possessed fully by the spirit of a demi-lich. As your soul is destroyed, this is equivalent to the death of your character; your physical form belongs to the lich now. A character who is immune to Will saves or is non-living is immediately possessed by the demi-lich within the weapon.

Knight's Bane (Cursed, Artifact)

[Pathfinder 2nd Edition]

This functions as a *+3 major striking unholy sword* (or other weapon) with the following curse.

Knight's Bane (arcane, curse,

necromancy) This curse affects anyone

who wields a graveknight's weapon for at least 1 encounter. **Saving Throw** Will save; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** doomed 1 and cannot remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 2** doomed 2, and cannot remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 3** dies and transforms into the weapon's graveknight.

PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION

The following is a reprint of the graveknight template found in Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3.

GRAVEKNIGHT (TEMPLATE)

A "graveknight" is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature with 5 or more Hit Dice (referred to hereafter as the base creature). Most graveknights were once humanoids. A graveknight uses the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as base creature +2.

Alignment: Any evil.

Type: The graveknight's type changes to undead (augmented). Do not recalculate class Hit Dice, BAB, or saves.

Senses: A graveknight gains darkvision 60 ft.

Aura: A graveknight emanates the following aura.

Sacrilegious Aura (Su): A graveknight constantly exudes an aura of intense evil and negative energy in a 30-foot radius. This aura functions as the spell *desecrate* and uses the graveknight's armor as an altar of sorts to double the effects granted. The graveknight constantly gains the benefits of this effect (including the bonus hit points, as this aura is part of the graveknight's creation). In addition, this miasma of fell energies hinders the channeling of positive energy. Any creature that attempts to summon positive energy in this area—such as through a cleric's channel energy ability, a paladin's lay on hands, or any spell with the healing subtype—must make a concentration check with a DC equal to $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the graveknight's Hit Dice + the graveknight's Charisma modifier. If the character fails, the effect is expended but does not function.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +4.

Hit Dice: Change all racial Hit Dice to d8s. Class Hit Dice are unaffected. As an undead, a graveknight uses its Charisma modifier to determine bonus hit points.

Defensive Abilities: A graveknight gains channel resistance +4; DR 10/magic; and immunity to cold, electricity, and any additional energy type noted by its ruinous revivification special quality. A graveknight also gains spell resistance equal to its augmented CR + 11.

The graveknight also gains the following ability.

Rejuvenation (Su): One day after a graveknight is destroyed, its armor begins to rebuild the undead horror's body. This process takes 1d10 days—if the body is destroyed before that time passes, the armor merely starts the process anew. After this time has elapsed, the graveknight wakes fully healed.

Attacks: A graveknight gains a slam attack if the base creature didn't have one. Damage for the slam depends on the graveknight's size.

Special Attacks: A graveknight gains the following special attacks. Save DCs are equal to $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the graveknight's HD + the graveknight's Charisma modifier unless otherwise noted.

Channel Destruction (Su): Any weapon a graveknight wields seethes with energy, and deals an additional 1d6

points of damage for every 4 Hit Dice the graveknight has. This additional damage is of the energy type determined by the ruinous revivification special quality.

Devastating Blast (Su): Three times per day, the graveknight may unleash a 30-foot cone of energy as a standard action. This blast deals 2d6 points of damage for every 3 Hit Dice a graveknight has (Reflex for half). This damage is of the energy type determined by the graveknight's ruinous revivification special quality.

Undead Mastery (Su): As a standard action, a graveknight can attempt to bend any undead creature within 50 feet to its will. The targeted undead must succeed at a Will save or fall under the graveknight's control. This control is permanent for unintelligent undead; an undead with an Intelligence score is allowed an additional save every day to break free from the graveknight's control. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same graveknight's undead mastery for 24 hours. A graveknight can control 5 Hit Dice of undead creatures for every Hit Die it has. If the graveknight exceeds this number, the excess from earlier uses of the ability becomes uncontrolled, as per *animate dead*.

Special Qualities: A graveknight gains the following.

Phantom Mount (Su): Once per hour, a graveknight can summon a skeletal horse similar to a phantom steed. This mount is more real than a typical phantom steed, and can carry one additional rider. The mount's powers are based on the graveknight's total Hit Dice rather than caster level. A graveknight's mount looks distinctive and always appears the same each time it is summoned. If the mount is destroyed, it can be summoned again with full hit points 1 hour later.

Ruinous Revivification (Su): At the time of its creation, the graveknight chooses one of the following energy types: acid, cold, electricity, or fire. This energy type should be relevant to the graveknight's life or death, defaulting to fire if none are especially appropriate. This energy type influences the effects of several of a graveknight's special abilities.

Ability Scores: Str +6, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a graveknight has no Constitution score.

Skills: Graveknights gain a +8 racial bonus on Intimidate, Perception, and Ride checks.

Feats: Graveknights gain Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, and Toughness as bonus feats.

PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION

The following is a reprint of the graveknight template found in the Pathfinder 2 Bestiary

GRAVEKNIGHT ABILITIES

A graveknight gains the undead and graveknight traits, and its alignment is usually adjusted to evil. It loses any abilities that come from it being a living creature and any traits that represent its life, such as human and humanoid.

Increase the creature's level by 1 and change its statistics as follows:

Increase its attack rolls, AC, saving throws, Perception, and skills by 1, its HP by 5, and its Strike damage by 1.

Darkvision

Negative Healing

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) When a graveknight is destroyed, its armor rebuilds its body over the course of 1d10 days—or more quickly if the armor is worn by a living host (see Graveknight Armor, below). If the body is destroyed before then, the process restarts. A graveknight can only be permanently destroyed by obliterating its armor (such as with disintegrate), transporting it to the Positive Energy Plane, or throwing it into the heart of a volcano.

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious, plus one energy type (the same chosen for ruinous weapons below).

Sacrilegious Aura (abjuration, aura, divine, evil) 30 feet. When a creature in the aura uses a positive spell or ability, the graveknight automatically attempts to counteract it, with the listed counteract modifier.

Devastating Blast [two-actions] (arcane, evocation) The graveknight unleashes a 30-foot cone of energy. Creatures in the area take 1d12 damage, plus an additional 1d12 damage for every two levels the graveknight has (basic Reflex save). The graveknight can use this ability once every 1d4 rounds. This energy damage is of the same type as that of its ruinous weapons (see below); Devastating Blast gains the associated energy trait.

Phantom Mount [three-actions] (arcane, conjuration, summon) The graveknight summons a supernatural mount as per phantom steed, heightened to a level equal to half the graveknight's level. Unlike phantom steed, the steed's AC and saving throw bonuses are all 4 lower than the graveknight's, and the steed has one-third the graveknight's Hit Points (rounded down).

If the steed is destroyed, the graveknight must wait 1 hour before using this ability again.

Ruinous Weapons At the time of its creation, a graveknight chooses one of the following energy types that was relevant to its life or death: acid, cold, electricity, or fire. Any weapon the graveknight wields gains the effects of the caustic, frost, shock, or flaming weapon rune, respectively, in addition to a +1 striking weapon rune. If the graveknight is 14th level or higher, its weapons instead gain the effects of the greater versions of both of these runes.

Weapon Master The graveknight has access to the critical specialization effects of any weapons it wields.

GRAVEKNIGHT ARMOR

Wearing graveknight armor is very risky, for the graveknight's essence rapidly parasitizes the new wearer, accelerating the graveknight's rejuvenation. This agonizing transformation inevitably kills the host, transforming their flesh into the graveknight's new body. Removing the curse allows a character to remove the armor, but if it ever wears the armor again, the curse returns. If the wearer dies from another cause while wearing the armor, or if the graveknight's rejuvenation completes before the wearer dies from the curse, the wearer immediately progresses to stage 3.

Graveknight's Curse (arcane, curse, necromancy) This curse affects anyone who wears a graveknight's armor for at least 1 hour. **Saving Throw** Will save; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** doomed 1 and cannot remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 2** doomed 2, and cannot remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 3** dies and transforms into the armor's graveknight.

PSYCHO-LICH

All lichs lose their humanity in the pursuit of power, but a psycho-lich takes it further than that and sacrifices their physical and mortal form in exchange for power that's only limited by imagination. Psycho-liches have as much power as others believe them to have and as such, they have to inspire fear and awe in those on the physical plane to be kept alive. They are simultaneously easy and difficult to defeat; one only need not fear them to remove their power, but psycho-liches have time, patience, and years of knowledge on the most frightful things one can imagine.

A psycho-lich is made by powerful, evil, psychic characters and is the occult equivalent to a traditional arcane lich. They must bind a hundred tortured souls to their psyche as part of their ritual of creation and the being that results is effectively an emotional projection of their own soul sustained by the souls that were used to constitute it. Their phylactery is of the abstract concept variety and is related to the perceptions of others. Defeating them is as much an effort in social engineering as it is a matter of physical combat because, so long as they are remembered and feared, they can never truly die.

Inspirations: Freddy Krueger (A Nightmare on Elm Street), Candyman (Candyman), Tulpa (Tibetan mythology), Cenobites (Hellraiser), Dandelo/Pennywise (Dark Tower/It)

EXAMPLE PSYCHO-LICHES

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few psycho-liches:

The Following Dark: A psychotic fae lich, The Following Dark exists as the quintessential childhood horror. Believed to be the first boogeyman, The Following Dark feeds on the terror it sows and delights in watching the brave slowly crumble into fear. While it will outright kill most victims, sometimes it will toy with a child and allow it to grow into adulthood before renewing the hunt. This has led it into conflict with many adventurers when it returns to hunt a member of the party, and even when groups defeat the Follow Dark it invariably returns to haunt the dreams of the young time and again.

The Whispered Lie: This lich is fueled by the idea of misinformation. Every time you tell an old wives' tale, sell snake oil cures, or a politician tells a convenient lie, The Whispered Lie is sustained. In life she was a powerful psychic who used her power to mentally dominate others and turn them into her mind-slaves. She had them go forth and sow seeds of chaos in the world for her own amusement and when she achieved lichdom she bound to the notion of misinformation. She knows that people can never stop telling lies so she will be sustained indefinitely but, as a consequence, she can only communicate in half truths and outright falsehoods.

PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION

A "psycho-lich" is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature with 5 or more Hit Dice (referred to hereafter as the base creature). Most were once humanoids. A psycho-lich uses the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as the base creature + 3.

Alignment: Any evil.

Type: The creature's type changes to undead (incorporeal). Do not recalculate BAB, saves, or skill ranks.

Senses: A psycho-lich gains darkvision 60 ft.

Hit Dice: Change all of the creature's racial Hit Dice to d8s. All Hit Dice derived from class levels remain unchanged. As undead, psycho-liches use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points (instead of Constitution).

Defensive Abilities: A psycho-lich gains channel resistance +4, DR 15/bludgeoning and magic, the incorporeal ability, and immunity to cold and electricity (in addition to those granted by its undead traits). The psycho-lich also gains the following defensive ability.

Belief-Based Rejuvenation (Su)

A psycho-lich can rejuvenate so long as it has a lasting emotional impact on creatures. The emotion it must evoke to sustain itself becomes its "chosen emotion". When a psycho-lich is destroyed, its body reforms so long as at least 100 living creatures on their native plane of existence recall and have a specific emotional response to it (fear being the most common). Its body rebuilds itself in a secluded place related to their chosen emotion. It normally takes 1 year to rebuild but it is reduced by 1 day for every additional 100 creatures, after the first 100, that have the proper emotional response to it. At minimum it can rejuvenate in 1 hour if at least 1,000 creatures on their native plane have a strong reaction to it. After this time passes, the psycho-lich awakens fully healed (albeit without any gear it left behind on its old body), usually with a burning need for revenge against those who previously destroyed it.

Melee Attack: A psycho-lich has a touch attack that it can use once per round as a natural weapon. A psycho-lich fighting without weapons uses its natural weapons (if it has any) in addition to its touch attack (which is treated as a primary natural weapon that replaces one claw or slam attack, if the creature has any). A psycho-lich armed with a weapon uses its weapons normally, and can use its touch attack as a secondary natural weapon.

Damage: A psycho-lich's touch attack uses negative energy to deal 1d8 points of damage to living creatures + 1 point of damage per 2 Hit Dice possessed by the psycho-lich. As negative energy, this damage can be used to heal undead creatures. A psycho-lich can take a full-round action to infuse itself with this energy, healing damage as if it had used its touch attack against itself.

Special Attacks: A psycho-lich gains the two special attacks described below. Save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 psycho-lich's HD + psycho-lich's Cha modifier unless otherwise noted.

Fear Aura (Su)

Creatures of less than 5 HD in a 60-foot radius that look at the psycho-lich must succeed on a Will save or become frightened. Creatures with 5 HD or more must succeed at a Will save or be shaken for a number of rounds equal to the psycho-lich's Hit Dice. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same psycho-lich's aura for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Frightening Touch (Su)

Any living creature a psycho-lich hits with its touch attack must succeed on a Will save or be frightened for 1 minute.

Special Qualities:

Power Of Belief (Su)

Any creature within 120 feet of the psycho-lich who fears it (or who exhibits the psycho-lich's chosen emotion) grant the psycho-lich a +1 on all d20 rolls for 1 hour. This bonus stacks with itself and can be no greater than 1/5th its HD at a time (minimum +1). A creature who suffers a fear effect from a psycho-lich (even if they are just demoralized by them) counts as being scared of them for 24 hours.

Conversely, any time a creature successfully saves against a mind-affecting effect the psycho-lich takes a -1 penalty on all d20 rolls for 1 hour. This bonus stacks with itself and can be no greater than 1/5th its HD at a time (maximum -5).

Sense Emotion (Su)

A psycho-lich is aware of the emotional state of any beings within the range of their fear aura as if they were the target of the *analyze aura* spell.

Abilities: Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +2. Being an incorporeal undead, a psycho-lich has no Strength or Constitution score.

Skills: Psycho-liches have a +8 racial bonus on Intimidate, Sense Motive, and Stealth checks. A psycho-lich always treats Climb, Disguise, Fly, Intimidate, Knowledge(arcana), Knowledge(religion), Perception, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, and Stealth as class skills. Otherwise, skills are the same as the base creature.

PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION

The following is a modification of the normal lich template:

Rejection weakness

Note: Occult vs Arcane All arcane aspects of a psycho-lich are instead occult.

Spellcasting Increase the spellcaster's level by 1 and change its statistics as follows. Increase spell DCs and spell attack roll by 2. (Note: This is listed in the "creating a lich" section.)

Darkvision

Saving Throws +1 status bonus to all saves vs. positive
Negative Healing

Rejuvenation (occult, necromancy) When a lich is destroyed, its soul immediately transfers to its phylactery. A lich can be permanently destroyed only if its phylactery is found and destroyed.

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Resistances cold 20, physical 15 (except magic bludgeoning)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 60 feet, DC 30

Courage Vulnerability A psycho-lich is sustained by other's fear of it and rejecting it can metaphysically harm them. When a creature makes a save against a fear effect of the psycho-lich (including the mindbreak effect of hand of fear) the psycho-lich takes 2d6 mental damage. For one hour after causing mental damage to a psycho-lich in this way, a creature can deal 2d6 mental damage to the succubus with a successful Demoralize incorporating its courage in the face of fear.

Hand of Fear All liches have a hand unarmed attack that deals 1d8 mental damage for every 3 levels and inflicts a mindbreak. This attack has the finesse trait.

Drain Phylactery [free action] **Frequency** once per day;

Effect The lich taps into its phylactery's power to cast any occult spell up to the highest level the lich can cast, even if the spell being cast is not one of the lich's prepared spells. The lich's phylactery doesn't need to be present for the lich to use this ability.

Mindbreak (occult, curse, fear, emotion) A creature damaged by the lich's hand Strike must succeed at a Will save against the lich's spell DC -4. The creature becomes frightened 3 on a failure. On a critical failure, the creature is frightened 6.

WAYWARD SOUL LICH

A wayward soul is a damned soul who has broken out of hell and reconstituted itself in the mortal world as a form of intelligent undead. Often heavily scarred and burned, these undead cannot die because they left something behind in hell and thus are technically "still there". This is something critical to them, an essential part of who they are, and they can only be dragged back to hell if a hero obtains or destroys this thing. This could be something like their shadow (living as its own monster), their name (represented by a stela etched with it as an intricate rune), their memories (contained in a magic crystal), or even their literal heart (wrapped in thorns and beating in the grasp of a demon lord). When they die they reform at that location, having to once again break out of hell to return to the mortal world. To avoid the final death they keep fleeing, wayward soul liches hide their anchors well, fearing what would happen if a denizen of hell were to lay claim over it.

A wayward soul is extremely adept at escaping the afterlife and was often a rogue, ninja, bard, phantom thief (LRGG), or showman (LRGG) in life. Death can't keep their fingers on these slippery souls who always manage to talk their way out of their fate, slip by guards, or even bribe their way out.

Wayward souls use their hellion powers to cause mischief and misfortune, and to stay out of the afterlife. While other liches are masters of magic, wayward souls cultivate supernatural powers akin to magic, and the essential part of them that they left behind in Hell is what serves as their equivalent of a phylactery.

Inspirations: Sisyphus (Greek Mythology), Spawn (Spawn), Zagreus (Hades)



SIDEBAR: HELL AND OTHER PLACES

We use “Hell” as a blanket term for the afterlife reserved for evil creatures. If you are playing a game set in ancient Greece it might be Tartarus, Hel if you’re playing a game based on Norse mythology, the Abyss or Abbadon (or some other evil plane) if your game is set in Golarion or a similar setting like Greyhawk (etc).

EXAMPLE WAYWARD SOULS

To help you get your creative juices flowing, here are a few wayward souls:

Gaut Gestsson, Scourge of Hel: Gaut was a cunning barbarian in life who died dishonorably at the hands of his son Skialg for his many crimes. Cast into Hel for all eternity worked, Gaut worked his wiles on the guards who kept him chained and, through cunning and incredible skill, escaped Hel to butcher the living. Constantly on the run from the beasts sent to hunt him he survives only because his name is inscribed on his legendary sword that rests in the stomach of Loki, who he convinced to swallow it.

Ciaran McClellani, the Gilded Prisoner: Ciaran was a soul so wicked in life that his punishment was to be sent to heaven where he had to watch the joys of devout souls. He was part of a party of adventurers, the shadowy rogue who helped save the day but betrayed his friends in the end. This pithy, sarcastic, rogue now sneaks out of his gilded cage to cause chaos on the world while his friends, now angels in their own right, eternally chase him across the land.

PATHFINDER 1ST EDITION

The following is a template that can be granted to a character to turn them into a wayward soul:

WAYWARD SOUL (TEMPLATE)

A “wayward soul” is an acquired template that can be added to any living creature with 5 or more Hit Dice (referred to hereafter as the base creature). Most wayward souls were once humanoids. A wayward soul uses the base creature’s statistics and abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as base creature +2.

Alignment: Any evil.

Type: The wayward soul’s type changes to undead (augmented). Do not recalculate class Hit Dice, BAB, or saves.

Senses: A wayward soul gains darkvision 60 ft.

Aura: A wayward soul emanates the following aura.

Sacrilegious Aura (Su)

A wayward soul constantly exudes an aura of intense evil and negative energy in a 30-foot radius. This aura functions as the spell *desecrate* and uses the wayward soul’s armor as an altar of sorts to double the effects granted. The wayward soul constantly gains the benefits of this effect (including the bonus hit points, as this aura is part of the wayward soul’s creation). In addition, this miasma of fell energies hinders the channeling of positive energy. Any creature that attempts to summon positive energy in this area—such as through a cleric’s channel energy ability, a paladin’s lay on hands, or any spell with the healing subtype—must make a concentration check with a DC equal to $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the wayward soul’s Hit Dice + the wayward soul’s Charisma modifier. If the character fails, the effect is expended but does not function.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +2.

Hit Dice: Change all racial Hit Dice to d8s. Class Hit Dice are unaffected. As an undead, a wayward soul uses its Charisma modifier to determine bonus hit points.

Defensive Abilities: A wayward soul gains channel resistance +4; DR 10/magic; and immunity to cold and electricity. A wayward soul also gains spell resistance equal to its augmented CR + 11.

The wayward soul also gains the following ability.

Rejuvenation (Su): When a wayward soul is destroyed, its phylactery (which is generally something essential to their being, hidden in Hell) immediately begins to rebuild their body nearby. This process takes 1d10 days- if the body is destroyed before that time passes, the phylactery merely starts the process anew. After this time passes, the wayward soul awakens fully healed (albeit without any gear it left behind on its old body), usually with a burning need for revenge against those who previously destroyed it.

Attacks: A wayward soul gains 2 claw attacks if the base creature didn’t have any. Damage for the claws depends on the wayward soul’s size.

Special Attacks: A wayward soul gains the following special attacks. Save DCs are equal to $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the wayward soul’s HD + the wayward soul’s Charisma modifier unless otherwise noted.

Sneak Attack (Ex): A wayward soul gains sneak attack (as described in the rogue’s entry in Chapter 3 of the Pathfinder Core Rulebook) as if they were a rogue of an equal level to their HD.

Undead Mastery (Su): As a standard action, a wayward soul can attempt to bend any undead creature within 50 feet to its will. The targeted undead must succeed at a Will save or fall under the wayward soul's control. This control is permanent for unintelligent undead; an undead with an Intelligence score is allowed an additional save every day to break free from the wayward soul's control. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same wayward soul's undead mastery for 24 hours. A wayward soul can control 5 Hit Dice of undead creatures for every Hit Die it has. If the wayward soul exceeds this number, the excess from earlier uses of the ability becomes uncontrolled, as per animate dead.

Special Qualities: A wayward soul gains the following.

Wayward (Su): A wayward soul is immune to divination effects and other effects that, through magic or supernatural abilities, detect them (such as *true seeing*) or discern information about them (even things like *legend lore* or the like). This has no effect on mundane means of detection or gaining knowledge (you can still read a book or spot them with a good Perception check) but magic that would help you identify them automatically fails.

Invisibility (Su): A wayward soul can turn invisible as a move action at will, as per the spell *greater invisibility*, with an indefinite duration.

Ability Scores: Dex +6, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a wayward soul has no Constitution score.

Skills: Wayward souls gain a +8 racial bonus on Bluff, Escape Artist, and Stealth checks.

Feats: Wayward souls gain Dodge and Improved Initiative as bonus feats.

Rogue Talents: Fast Stealth

PATHFINDER 2ND EDITION

The following is a modification of the normal lich template:

Spellcasting Increase the spellcaster's level by 1 and change its statistics as follows. Increase spell DCs and spell attack roll by 2. (Note: This is listed in the "creating a lich" section.)

Darkvision

Saving Throws +1 status bonus to all saves vs. positive

Negative Healing

Rejuvenation (arcane, necromancy) When a lich is destroyed, its soul immediately transfers to its phylactery. A lich can be permanently destroyed only if its phylactery is found and destroyed.

Immunities death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

Resistances cold 20, physical 15 (except magic bludgeoning)

Wayward (Su): A wayward soul is immune to all divination effects.

Naturally Invisible The wayward soul is invisible at all times, though when it takes a hostile action of any kind, it is hidden instead of undetected until the start of its next turn, as the vague outline of its humanoid form is faintly visible for a short period of time.

Sneak Attack The wayward soul can use sneak attack as if they were a rogue of the same level.

Paralyzing Sneak Attack (arcane, curse, incapacitation, necromancy) A creature damaged by the lich's sneak attack must succeed at a Fortitude save against the wayward soul's class DC - 4. The creature becomes paralyzed for 1 round on a failure. On a critical failure, the creature is paralyzed permanently, falls prone, and seems dead. A DC 25 Medicine check reveals the victim is alive.

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