



A PLACE BEYOND HELL

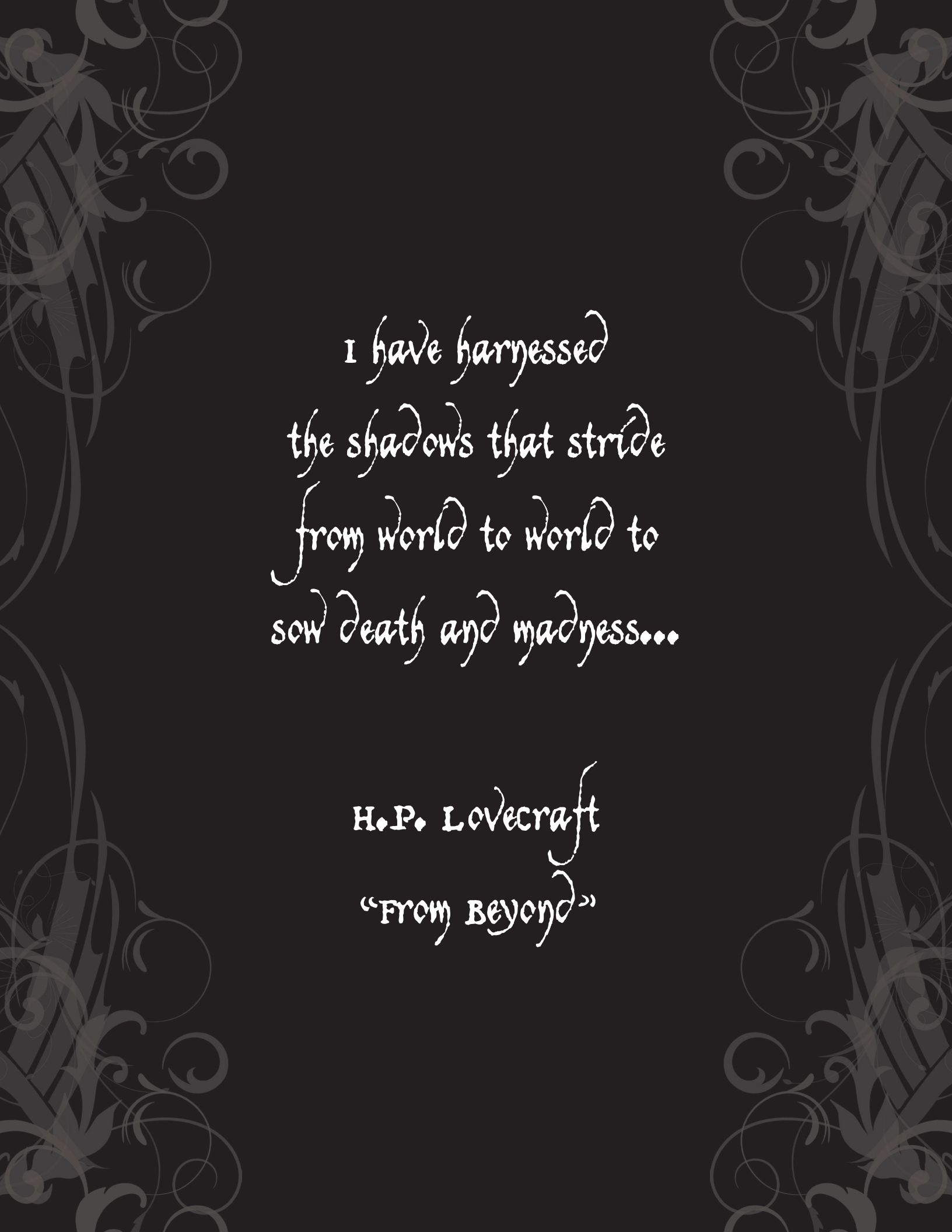
POST APOCALYPTIC LOVECRAFTIAN HORRORS SOURCEBOOK



LPI9539

OGL
3.5 SYSTEM COMPATIBLE

PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE



I have harnessed
the shadows that stride
from world to world to
sow death and madness...

H.P. Lovecraft
"From Beyond"



BOOK



H'LAQU: BEYOND DARKNESS

the h'laqu

The H'Laqu were not present on Abaddon until the disaster happened. They came with it, were the progenitors of it, were part of the meteor itself. They were – and are – the engineers of Abaddon's destruction. Now they're found, increasingly, all over the world. Insinuating themselves into air, stone, flesh and plants, subverting and spreading, wandering far and wide and engaging in strange and unnatural behaviours that nobody can understand. They're not of this world, not of this dimension, not of this reality in any way. Inscrutable, inimical to the very existence of this world, perhaps even insane, the H'Laqu are a growing presence, a growing influence and a growing concern to all the forces at work across Abaddon. A threat that can't be understood, controlled or even directed, beyond the schemes and plans of man and undead alike.

what are the h'laqu?

The planes are all but cut off from the material realm of Abaddon now. Holes can open in the dimensions and allow things to fall through to Abaddon and get stuck there, but it's impossible for anyone to leave Abaddon's material dimension in any way. Even these other planes share common qualities with the material plane though, perhaps gravity, perhaps the flow of time. Essentially any person travelling from one of these planes to another can relate to it in some way. Those worlds are graspable, comprehensible, understandable.

The H'Laqu are not.

The H'Laqu defy normal definition. They are one and many, bodiless and yet they inhabit the physical. They are everywhere and nowhere at once. They don't come from an alternate plane of existence but from the very membrane between the worlds itself, the gap between the spheres. Relentless, uncaring and utterly alien the H'Laqu regard the inhabitants of Abaddon as largely being beneath their notice, they have fashioned this disaster, this world as their experiment and they begin to infest and change it, more like a virus than anything that anyone has ever fought before, but it is reality that they infect.

where do the h'laqu come from?

Between realities, between the planes and the material realities there are gaps, spaces, a thin membrane that divides one reality from another. Sometimes this opens up into larger gaps, but it still isn't a reality but rather a space of potentiality, emptiness, non-existence.

The H'Laqu come from this space between the worlds, whether they originate there or not is lost in the depths of time but these spaces had become their home – and their

THE STORY OF BLACK GLASS

THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE BLACKGLASS DESERT FOR LEAGUES IN EVERY DIRECTION. NOTHING GREW THERE, NOTHING LIVED THERE. IT WAS AN ENDLESS EXPANSE OF GROUND GLASS, EXTENDING TO EVERY POINT OF THE COMPASS, WHIPPED UP INTO STORMS THAT WOULD SCOUR THE FLESH FROM YOUR BONES IN MOMENTS AND TEAR YOU TO RAGGED SHREDS.

THE MAGGOT-KIN HAS BEEN WANDERING THIS INHOSPITABLE PLACE FOR WEEKS NOW, DRINKING THEIR OWN PISS TO SURVIVE, BUT THERE WAS PRECIOUS LITTLE TO EAT. SO BAD WAS IT THAT FALLING INTO THE COMPANY OF A WANDERING BAND OF GLASS-CUT GHOULS EARLIER THAT EVENING HAD BEEN A BLESSING, RATHER THAN A CURSE. NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WEEKS, THE MAGGOT-KIN HAD BLOOD TO DRINK, FLESH TO CHEW AND BONES TO BURN.

"TELL US, BLOWFLY." THEY ASKED, IN THE FLICKERING LIGHT OF THE BURNING BONES. "TELL US OF THE H'LAQU." GROWN BOLD BY THEIR BRUSHES WITH DEATH AND THE REMOTE, EMPTINESS OF THE DESERT.

"YOU SHOULDN'T TALK OF SUCH THINGS." GRUNTED BLOWFLY, STRIPPING THE ROTTEN FLESH FROM A GHOUL'S FINGER WITH HIS FILED DOWN TEETH, THROWING BACK HIS HOOD TO LET THEM SEE HIS BEADY RED EYES, HOW SERIOUS HE WAS.

"OUR LUCK WON'T HOLD BLOWFLY, WE KNOW YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM. IF WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE ANYWAY, WHAT'S THE HARM IN TELLING US?"

"YOU WON'T KNOW THE HARM UNTIL I TELL YOU ABOUT THEM." MUTTERED BLOWFLY, CHEWING ON THE STRIPPED MEAT AND SUCKING THE RANCID MARROW FROM THE BONES. "THEN IT'LL BE TOO LATE, BUT I SEE I'LL GET NO PEACE OTHERWISE." HE SIGHED AND TOSSED THE BONE ONTO THE FIRE WITH THE OTHERS TO BURN.

"THEY WEREN'T HERE... BEFORE." HE GRUNTED, NOBODY NEEDED TO ASK WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT. "THEY CAME WITH IT, WERE NEVER SEEN BEFORE IT. THEY'RE NOT LIKE ANYTHING ELSE. THEY'RE NOT EVIL, NOT EXACTLY. YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE WITH EVIL. EVIL IS RELATABLE, THERE'S A BIT OF EVIL IN ALL OF US AND WE KNOW HOW IT THINKS, WHAT IT LIKES, WHAT IT'S TRYING TO DO."

HE SIGHED AGAIN AND POKED THEIR MEAGRE, GREEN-TINGED FIRE WITH A SHIN BONE. "THE H'LAQU ARE DIFFERENT... INDIFFERENT. THEY JUST DON'T CARE ABOUT US, AT ALL, THEY DON'T WISH US HARM, THEY DON'T WISH US GOOD. WE'RE AN ASSET OR WE'RE IN THE WAY AND LITTLE – IF ANYTHING – IN BETWEEN. THEY'RE NOT DARK TO LIGHT, THEY'RE NOT EVIL TO GOOD, THEY'RE NOT LIKE ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF. THEY CORRUPT, THEY TWIST, THEY USE, THEY SUBVERT."

HE PAUSED A MOMENT AND LEANED FORWARD TOWARDS HIS GANG OF COMPATRIOTS, EMPHASISING HIS FINAL POINT.

"THEY'RE JUST WRONG."

prison. They had been confined to one small portion of this 'gap' between realities, imprisoned, crystallised within this tiny space, reduced from infinite possibility to none. Time goes on forever though, things change, even in the vastness of the multiverse and the H'Laqu had beat against the walls of their prison so very long, observing the movement of the spheres, waiting for the moment that they could tear free a section of their prison and send it hurtling into a reality,

sending some of their number through to pave the way for the rest, to find a way to free their brothers and to understand the material universe.

What do the H'Laqu want?

The H'Laqu want nothing more than to be free but their very nature is separate from reality, distinct from it. They do not understand living or unliving beings. They do not understand the material multiverse and they need to understand it, to adapt to it and to enter it. They have laid waste to Abaddon in order to establish a beachhead, a research station to understand the material universe and to entrap samples from the broader multiverse.

Sklar sat silent in the roadhouse, bent over a cup of murky water. His scars itched and the hot wind, blowing in fragments of ash and grit from the desert beyond didn't help. He felt every year of his thirty years as through they were twice, or three times as many. His side, especially bothered him, still bandaged from the ambush of the caravan he had been protecting. He still didn't know what it was they had faced. Men, perhaps? Black as the night, like shadows, like empty spaces in the world and even the strongest magic had barely touched them. He had been one of few survivors, the rest having gone to fill the bellies of the maggot-kin who had found them, rescued them – after a fashion.

His hand went to his side, it ached, it hurt, it was healing fast enough – he was lucky in that at least – but the area around it was blue and purple, as though bruised, even though it didn't hurt as though it was. He had been laying up in this roadhouse, drinking the filthy water and eating the questionable food for too long, waiting for it to heal, now his coin was almost gone and it would be time to seek sword work sooner, rather than later – but who would hire a wounded mercenary, even if he felt well enough?

There was a sudden wave of sickness that washed over him, perhaps he still wasn't well after all? The room span and he hunched lower over his water, retching a little. Then he thought... he thought he heard a voice, a voice inside that wasn't his own. A voice offering to take the pain away, to make him strong again, to make him powerful, if only he would say yes and stop resisting, stop trying to heal himself from the wound that wasn't a wound. The wound itched again as he listened to the voice, making him more and more aware of its presence, biting – as though fresh – and he was tempted, sorely, sorely tempted...

Feats of the Outer Dark

The presence and existence of the H'Laqu has created a profound spiritual and physical shift in the nature of Abaddon. These strange beings and their peculiar ways, their awesome power, invites worship as gods, fear as they

are unnatural and alien and a response to their invading presence. The H'Laqu themselves are seductive, dangerous, infectious, changing everything that they come into contact with in one manner or another. They don't work quite like anything else and this is reflected in the Feats that have arisen in their presence and amongst their cults. This is particularly true for two new forms of Feat:

Taint Feats

Taint Feats represent the creeping corruption of the H'Laqu, seductive in its power. These beings are like an infection and where they touch their influence is felt. For some this may appear to be a gift, but it always comes with a price of some kind, consequences that the person infected with their presence cannot always anticipate. To the cults these are seen as a gift, to others a curse, those who are marked in such a way may be treated as pariahs or prophets, depending upon the mindset of the local population. Even both.

Ritual Feats

The H'Laqu have magic, of a sort, working on their own ritualistic and 'scientific' understanding. Those who serve them can be taught some of these formulae which, while not as versatile or as useful as conventional spells are in the reach of the most ordinary cultist, able to be called upon to supplement their might and to spread their corruption further across the world.

New Feats

a Stitch in time (ritual)

While portals to other dimensions and planes cannot leave Abaddon, they can enter it and these holes in space are often the source of much terror and destruction. There are spells that can be used to close these gates but there are also rituals which can tap into the fractured energies of Abaddon and turn them to close the portals.

Prerequisites: Level 10+, Wisdom 12+, Intelligence 12+

Benefit: The ritual requires five participants, only one of which need know the ritual. A circle is marked upon the ground in the dirt or in chalk and a pointing device – typically a dagger, sword, staff or wand – is pointed at the breach. For the duration of the ritual – a half hour – the main ritualist must be protected by the other participants and at the end of that time the portal or rift is closed off. This will effect portals created by spells, so long as they are temporary and not permanent magic, it will also close off portals and rifts used as plot devices, at the Games Master's discretion.

Bait (combat)

You are expert in drawing the attention of monsters upon you, getting them to concentrate their attacks upon your person so that your friends can deliver blows while the creature is distracted.

Prerequisites: Cha 12+, Bluff 4+

Benefit: By making a Bluff check against an enemy's Will save, as a half action, the character can draw the attention of that enemy in combat. The enemy is compelled – if it can – to move at least five feet towards the character and gains a +1 bonus to hit and do damage to that character, while taking a -2 penalty to hit anyone else. The effects last for a number of turns equal to the amount the character beat the target's Will save by.

black blood (taint)

The taint of the H'Laqu has transformed your blood into something unnatural, caught between this world and the spaces between worlds. That it sustains your life at all is a miracle.

Prerequisites: A close encounter with the H'Laqu or their agents.

Benefit: The character is rendered completely immune to all poisons and diseases both natural and unnatural.

Drawback: The Games Master may pick one of the following drawbacks from the taint to apply to your character:

1. Your skin darkens to an unnatural dark hue, marking you as touched. Reduce your Charisma by -2.
2. Your body is constantly trying to reject the blood that flows in your veins rendering you weak and causing you to weep and cough up black blood almost constantly. Reduce your Constitution by -2.
3. Your nature gives you some of the weakness of the H'Laqu, non-magical weapons automatically confirm critical hits against you.

black whip (general combat)

The black whip is a terrible weapon made from extruded parts of the H'Laqu and given to their trusted servants. These weapons are flexible rents in reality, held by obsidian handles with the reach of a whip and the rending power of a blade.

black whip

Cost: N/A, **Dmg(S):** 1d6, **Dmg(M):** 1d6, **Critical:** x3, **Weight:** 1 lb., **Type:** S, **Special:** Disarm, Reach, Trip.

Black Whips ignore the bonus of magical armour when they strike, so that +2 leather armour would only provide two points of protection against a black whip, not four.

Prerequisites: Only trusted servants of the H'Laqu may be gifted with a black whip and taught in its use.

Benefit: You gain a black whip and the exotic weapon proficiency to use it.

cult of black glass (general)

The Cult of Black Glass is a widespread and secretive cult that serves the H'Laqu, going where they cannot, observing



what remains of the mortal and undead races and being slowly corrupted by the H'Laqu who watch through them. There are agents of the cult everywhere and membership within the cult grants access to allies and information – so long as you are working for the H'Laqu purposes.

Prerequisites: Induction into The Cult of Black Glass.

Benefit: Access to the resources of The Cult of Black Glass.

empty of life (general)

The character is lacking in the essential, vital force that animates both living and nonliving entities. This grants them certain additional capabilities but makes them weak in other ways, essentially an empty vessel, ripe for possession.

Prerequisites: This feat may only be taken at character creation. The character may not have good or evil alignments.

Benefit: The character is soulless and may not be resurrected by any means whatsoever. Their body is an empty shell that has never been inhabited by an animating force and is nothing more than a biological machine. They are resistant to psychic and physical harm but are an open book to mind control and possessing forces. They gain a +2 bonus to Fortitude and Will saves, but take a -5 penalty (and lose this bonus) when subjected to mind controlling powers or possession attempts.

experiment (taint)

In trying to understand the material universe in which they find themselves the H'Laqu perform many dangerous and unnatural experiments upon demihuman, human and animal subjects, trying to blend their physical and magical qualities to better understand both halves of the new creation that they have made. While most of these subjects are destroyed some manage to escape into the wilderness and survive,

while others are ‘rescued’ by adventurers and set free. Some of these unfortunate souls take up the adventuring life for themselves, seeking to use what was done to them to their advantage.

Prerequisites: Experimented on by the H’Laqu.

Benefit: The character gains the benefit of a special monster ability – at the Games Master’s discretion – but must pay for this with a distorted physique. Typically this means the loss of -2 Charisma and a monstrous feature of some kind – such as a goblin’s bug-eyed, evil aspect – along with the benefit that they gain. In the case of the goblin that might be the ability to see in the dark. Typically these are relatively minor abilities, rather than dragonbreath or death-rays, but theoretically there is no limit to what the H’Laqu might blend.

eyes in the darkness (general)

Exposed to the unnatural radiation of the world and its many horrors, many minds are shattered and remade, opened up to the world beyond normal sight. This can give them powerful insights and resistance to illusions, as they begin to gain the barest hint of how the things beyond the veil see the universe.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 18+. This Feat must be taken at character generation or after a traumatic incident involving an outsider, particularly the H’Laqu.

Benefit: The character is considered to constantly have the benefit of the True Seeing spell, subject to all its normal limitations and drawbacks. In addition the character may never have a total Will save score higher than their level, due to the fragility of their mind.

eyes of darkness (ritual)

The H’Laqu infect men, women, beasts, the land and even the air itself with their unnatural essence, working their way into the cracks between the material substance of a thing to control it. Many of these beasts, which carry a fragment of the H’Laqu consciousness, are offered as servants to their cults and agents and the Corvidim are one such of these dark servants.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 12+, Intelligence 12+, membership of an H’Laqu cult and taught the ritual.

Benefit: To summon the Corvidim the ritualist must darken a flat rock or a clear patch of ground with ash, oil or anything else that can blacken the surface before burning a fistful of feathers and tossing the ash into the air. This will call 1d3 Corvidim within 1d20 rounds which will perform one service for the ritualist. The ritual may only be conducted once per day.

fugue (combat)

Many victims of trauma and distress are left with tattered minds or periods where they black out or simply forget what they have done. Sometimes waking up to the aftermath of horrors or great feats that they, themselves, have perpetrated

with no knowledge of what they have done. Some learn to harness this and to use it to their advantage.

Prerequisites: A horribly traumatic experience, Wisdom 12+, Constitution 12+.

Benefit: The character gains +1 to their attack rolls and +1 to their Armour Class, along with damage reduction 1 (against all kinds of attacks) for the duration of the fugue, which can be induced a number of times per day equal to their Wisdom bonus, lasting 1d6 x 10 rounds. Once the character’s immediate goal is complete – stated at the start of the fugue – the Games Master takes control of the character for the remainder of the fugue time period and the character is likely to harm themselves, engage in strange actions or even attack their friends and allies.

full of life unlife (general)

Some individuals are so full of the very essence of living existence, life or unlife itself, that their very presence is repellent and disgusting to the H’Laqu, driving them back and thwarting them.

Prerequisites: Charisma or Constitution 12+. This Feat may only be taken at character creation.

Benefits: The character gains +1 hit point per level (this can stack with Toughness) and also gains a +2 bonus to any save or other rolls to resist or confound the abilities and attacks of the H’Laqu or their agents, due to the ‘repellent’ nature of their bodies.

hag-ridden (taint)

The H’Laqu can literally infect the physical body of a person, creature or thing, even the very air itself and adventurers are no exception. With this feat your character is infected with a fragment of the H’Laqu but has it – barely – contained and under control, gaining insight into the H’Laqu and their nature.

Prerequisites: The character must have encountered the H’Laqu and may or may not have been infected by them in game terms. They must have a Will Save greater than +6.

Benefits: The character has a ‘captive’ fragment of the H’Laqu contained within their body and this gives them a rudimentary insight into this terrible enemy. The character can detect H’Laqu and their taint within twenty feet, at will, with no resistance possible. They also gain +1 to attacks and damage against the H’Laqu thanks to their insight. They are more vulnerable to the H’Laqu’s attacks themselves however and suffer -1 to Armour Class and +1 damage from H’Laqu attacks – and those of their servants - in return.

hand from beyond (taint)

The H’Laqu are not from the material world and when they become blended with that which is, as they infect it and spread throughout it many strange effects can become manifest. In some cases a physical being can become bound

to a tendril of H'Laqu energy, a string of unnatural non-substance that can lash and cut invisibly around them.

Prerequisites: The character must have suffered a close encounter with the H'Laqu and have a Constitution of 12+.

Benefit: The character may lash out with a whip-like, invisible tendril of H'Laqu 'flesh' which can strike even incorporeal beings and those which are normally immune to physical attacks. This attack roll is made at -2 as it is crude and clumsy and does 1d4 damage, x2 on a Critical hit. It has a reach of 10 ft. and the attack is made in addition to any normal attacks.

hidden knowledge (taint)

Those tainted and infected by the H'Laqu can sometimes hear and understand their whispering in the backs of their minds and can even communicate with them in a crude fashion, tapping into the secrets and understandings of the strange beings from beyond reality.

Prerequisites: Intelligence 12+, Wisdom 12+ and an encounter with the H'Laqu or an H'Laqu infection.

Benefit: A number of times equal to the character's level they can attempt to tap into the knowledge of the H'Laqu in order to receive a +4 bonus to a skill check. The Games Master may use this, when applied to information gathering or knowledge rolls, to feed false information to the character to further the H'Laqu agenda. Instead of taking a Skill bonus the character may choose to use this ability in the same manner as the spell Augury, though, again, the Games Master may choose this as an opportunity to provide false information if it furthers the H'Laqu cause.

hollow man (taint)

Some people are left hollow shells by H'Laqu infection. Black eyed husks that are only kept in motion by their indomitable wills and reluctance to die or fall to the darkness.

Prerequisite: The character must have suffered and overcome H'Laqu infection, Will Save 8+.

Benefit: The character's body is no longer truly alive, or undead. It isn't quite real any more. Their flesh becomes strangely insubstantial giving them a natural armour of +2 and they gain a permanent +5 to their Hit Points. Should they be brought down to 0 hit points however, they are instantly destroyed.

horrific countenance (general)

There are many sources of terrible injury to be found on Abaddon, not to mention the horrors visited upon any body simply by nature of having to live in such a world or from the mere fact of being undead. While many who live on this shattered world are inured to horror there are still those who can instil terror in those around them.

Prerequisite: This Feat may only be taken at character creation or after a terrible, deforming or transformational incident.

Benefit: The character gains a Fear Rating (See the book Horrific Fears page 7) equal to their Level +2.

mark of darkness (ritual)

The Cult of Black Glass exists to gather information, offer worship and to spread the influence of the H'Laqu, their followers hoping to gain some small favour from these strange beings or to stave off their own destruction, even to claim a little of their power for themselves. The Mark of Darkness ritual allows the cult to spread the H'Laqu influence to others, infecting them with their essence.

Prerequisite: This Feat may only be taken by members of the H'Laqu cult.

Benefit: By binding a prisoner and painting their flesh with geometric patterns over the course of half an hour the ritualist may call the attention of the H'Laqu and force the target to make an infection check. See H'Laqu infection.

numb the mind (ritual)

The Cult of Black Glass deals with unnameable, unknowable horror every day and encounters with their masters can be harrowing. Let alone the bleak terror of existence in Abaddon in any case. The cult has come up with ways to numb their minds to horror so that they are relatively unaffected by it, though it weakens their mind in other ways.

Prerequisite: This Feat may only be taken by members of the H'Laqu cult.

Benefit: The ritual requires the preparation and imbibing of a sacred draught, the ingredients for which cost one gold piece to gather. This draught is drunk together while a chant is sung and horrific incidents and creatures are visualised. At the end of the ritual – which lasts half an hour – the participants are numbed to horror. Fear rating (See Horrific Fears) are considered 5 less until a 24 hour period is up but, during the same period, the recipient suffers a -1 penalty to Will saves in general.

the bitter end (ritual)

The Cult of Black Glass is hated, feared and pursued and while they try to keep to the shadows they will eventually get found out and will need to find a way to protect themselves. This ritual allows for the preparation of a sacred object which can call a part of their master to them to protect them.

Prerequisite: This Feat may only be taken by a member of the H'Laqu cult with an Intelligence of 14+.

Benefit: The ritual involves the shaping and engraving of a fist-sized lump of obsidian. Only one may be prepared per ritualist at any time. When shattered against the ground it

summons an Abyssal Arm for a period of 3d4 rounds before it snaps back into the between-world.

the gap of worlds (ritual)

With a consolidated effort The Cult of Black Glass can tear a hole through to the world between and allow H'Laqu manifestations to spread from this tear, infecting a new settlement with their presence.

Prerequisite: This Feat may only be taken by a member of the H'Laqu cult with an Intelligence of 14+.

Benefit: With the participation of at least two dozen cultists and the sacrifice of a living or undead victim at a ritually prepared site – covered in geometric patterns – the ritualist can create a breach, allowing the H'Laqu to spread their influence into a new area.

the gone (ritual)

Those completely infected and withered by the H'Laqu seed within them become 'Black Men'. Empty, hollow shells, man-shaped holes in the universe, avatars of the void and these – with the proper preparation – can be summoned by members of the H'Laqu cult to do their bidding.

Prerequisite: This Feat may only be taken by a member of the H'Laqu cult.

Benefit: With the sacrifice of a living or undead victim the energy released can be channelled through the H'Laqu seed in the belly of the cultist to bring forth a Black Man to do their bidding. The Black Man will take 1d4 x 6 hours to arrive and will follow a single instruction before returning to the wilderness.

withering stare (taint)

Those touched by the emptiness of the H'Laqu sometimes show their influence in a horrifying, empty stare that seems to peer right into someone and wither their soul

Prerequisite: The character must be infected with H'Laqu taint and have Charisma 12+.

Benefit: The character may fix a single target with their stare at any time, in combat or outside combat. That target suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls while subjected to the stare but the character using the gaze must be in line of sight and may only take a single 5 ft. step while using this ability.

spells

What the H'Laqu practice isn't truly magic but that hasn't prevented their knowledge, their 'science' being channelled through spells or inspiring magicians in their service to combine this ancient, otherworldly power with their own magical capabilities. The nature of the H'Laqu is antithetical to both life and unlife, disruptive to reality and to physical matter and so the magic of their followers reflects the nature of their being.

THE TALE OF SYNA

GOLAR AND HIS MEN DRAGGED THE REMAINS OF THE STRANGE THING THEY HAD FOUGHT DOWN THE STAIRS INTO THE CRYPT. GOLAR HATED COMING DOWN HERE BUT SYNA THE WIDOW WAS THE ONE WHO WOULD PAY THE MOST FOR WHAT THEY HAD FOUND. THE ONLY ONE, IN FACT, WHO WOULD PAY AT ALL AND SO, IT WAS WORTH BRAVING HER CRYPT, HER COBWEBS AND HER STRANGE COCOONS FOR SOME COINS AND PERHAPS SOME LEAVINGS FROM HER MAGICAL EXPERIMENTATIONS.

SYNA'S ANTECHAMBER WAS DESIGNED TO STRIKE FEAR AND AWE IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO CAME TO DEAL WITH HER, LINED WITH THE SKULLS AND BONES, JARS CONTAINING THE PRESERVED REMAINS OF A THOUSAND DIFFERENT SPECIES. GOLAR GESTURED TO HIS MEN AND THEY DROPPED THE SACKS, THEY HAD FILLED WITH THE REMAINS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHAMBER. STRIKING THE BELL THAT WOULD SUMMON THE HALF-DEAD WITCH TO ATTEND TO HER GUESTS.

SYNA APPEARED LIKE A GHOST, MOVING WITH AN EERIE PRECISION, LIKE AN INSECT, A SPIDER AT HER BREAST, TWITCHING JUST ENOUGH TO INDICATE THAT IT WAS ALIVE, RATHER THAN JEWELLERY. HER SALLOW FACE, RED EYES STARING WITH THE INNATE HOSTILITY OF THOSE WHO SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ALONE, FIXED UPON GOLAR AND HER SIBILANT VOICE HISSED OUT.

"WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT USSS GOLAR? SSSOMETHING NICE? SSSOMETHING NEW?"

"I THINK YOU'LL BE PLEASED MADAM." HE REPLIED, BEING AS POLITE AND BRAVE AS HE COULD BE, NO GOOD LOOKING FEARFUL IN FRONT OF HIS MEN, EVEN IF THE WITCH SCARED THE HELL OUT OF HIM. HE GESTURED, CURTLY TO HIS MEN, WHO THREW OPEN THE SACKS TO REVEAL THE STRANGE AND EPHEMERAL FLESH BENEATH AND THE PURPLISH VAPOUR THAT ROSE FROM IT.

SYNA STALKED DOWN FROM HER THRONE OF BONES AND WEBS AND BENT OVER THE REMAINS OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A MAN, HER BUGGED EYES WIDENING STILL FURTHER AS SHE BENT OVER IT.

"OTHER... BUT NOT OTHER... PLANAR BUT NOT FROM ANY PLANE... DARK BUT NOT OF DARKNESS... MALEVOLENT... BUT NOT EVIL. THIS CREATURE, WHATEVER IT IS, IS A MASS OF CONTRADICTIONS. I WILL BE ABLE TO LEARN A LOT, THIS OPENS UP NEW POSSIBILITIES, NEW PATHS FOR MAGIC – EVEN THOUGH THIS CREATURE HAS NONE..." SHE TRAILED OFF, MUMBLING TO HERSELF, PRODDING AT THE REMAINS WITH A BONY FINGER.

"THERE IS STILL THE SMALL MATTER OF PAYMENT, MADAM." GOLAR SPOKE UP, COUGHING SLIGHTLY TO DRAW THE STRANGE WOMAN'S ATTENTION BACK TO HIM, HIS MEN WERE ITCHING TO GET OUT OF HERE AND HE DIDN'T BLAME THEM.

WITHOUT EVEN LOOKING, WITHOUT EVEN PAYING ATTENTION, SYNA REACHED IN HER SLEEVE WITH HER CLAW-LIKE HAND AND BROUGHT OUT A SMALL LEATHER BAG, DROPPING IT INTO GOLAR'S HAND SO ABRUPTLY AND SO INACCURATELY THAT HE HAD TO SCRAMBLE TO CATCH IT. WHEN HE OPENED IT, IT GLITTERED WITH DOZENS OF GEMSTONES, TEN TIMES THE SUM THAT HE HAS BEEN EXPECTING, NOT THAT HE WAS GOING TO COMPLAIN. HE POCKETED IT AND BACKED AWAY SLOWLY, GESTURING TO HIS MEN TO FOLLOW, LEAVING THE MUTTERING WITCH TO HER RUMINATIONS.

Others have created spells that disrupt and protect against the H'Laqu, having survived encounters with them but both kinds of magic are rare and only now beginning to spread as the presence of the H'Laqu becomes more widely known – and feared.

antilife bolt

School Evocation [Non-specific]; **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 3

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S.

Range 50 ft.

Target Single opponent.

Duration Instantaneous/1 hour/level.

Saving Throw Reflex negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

Opening a brief hole to the 'space between' the caster channels a bolt of nothingness and hurls it into their target where it spreads like a disease through their flesh, turning their veins black, outwards from the point of impact and making them appear – and act – diseased.

This spell corrupts the very essence of life and unlife, reducing the target's maximum hit points by 1d4 per caster level to a maximum of 10d4. While the spell is in effect the target cannot be healed above their new, temporary, maximum hit points and if the spell reduces their maximum hit points to 0, then they are considered dead, not dying.

antilife ward

School Abjuration [neutral]; **Level** Cleric/Paladin/Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A 3 ft. radius circle of blood or powdered bone).

Range Touch.

Area 10 ft. radius around circle.

Duration 10 minutes/level.

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** No.

Ranging out from the inscribed circle a zone of energy, antithetical to this reality and all that lives within it, emanates outwards to a radius of 10 ft. Light and colour within the area drain and dim and the spell creates a barrier of this energy that any living or unliving being will have a hard time crossing to reach those protected within the circle. Only constructs, animated objects and beings infected by the H'Laqu are immune to the effects.

Attempting to cross the ward has a DC of 15 + caster level and each failed attempt by a living or undead being to cross the ward costs them 1d4 hit points. Each turn a living or undead being spends within the area of effect also costs them a single hit point.

become shadow

School Transmutation (polymorph); **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 6

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A cast shadow).

Range Personal.

Target You.

Duration 1 min/level.

With the spell cast the magician's body melds with their own shadow and can move at their normal pace for the duration of the spell. The shadow form cannot cast spells, cannot speak and cannot lift or manipulate objects. Nor can it be harmed by any means save by being plunged into darkness. The shadow has no thickness and can slip through the tiniest gap in a door or window to gain entry. Shadow form gains a +4 inherent bonus to Stealth checks.

Shadow form is limited to areas of light where a shadow can be cast and at least some part of the caster's shadow form must remain in an area of light at all times. If the shadow form enters an area of darkness or is plunged into darkness then they revert to their normal form and suffer 1d6 x 1d4 hit points of damage.

beyond alignment

School Enchantment **Level** 8

Casting Time 1 minute.

Components V, S.

Range Personal.

Target You.

Duration 1 hour/level.

The H'Laqu are creatures beyond anything that any of the races of Abaddon would consider morality. They are not evil, just beyond such considerations and so arrogant and so different that they defy such definitions. The H'Laqu are able to use items and capabilities, regardless of their normal moral restrictions and alignment and those who have studied them have found ways to take on that same, higher disdain for morality that the H'Laqu have, enabling them to move beyond restrictions in the same way, though this can be morally dangerous for a character as they emerge from the effect.

Under the effect of the spell a character is freed from all restrictions and effects related to alignment. They may use weapons and magic items regardless of their alignment restrictions, may pass through magical barriers that restrict according to alignment and may perform moral acts that would normally be beyond the bounds of their alignment.

Repeated use of the spell or dubious moral actions undertaken while under its influence may shift the character's alignment towards neutral once the spell wears off, at the Games Master's discretion.

black meteor shield

School Abjuration. **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A fragment of the meteor)

Range Personal.

Area A 5 ft.-radius cylindrical whirlwind centred on you.

Duration 1 round/level.

This spell draws upon the resonance between a single meteor fragment and all others, drawing fragments, dust, sand and shards together into a whirling debris field around the caster. This whirling field of debris increases your Armour Class by +2 and does 1d4 +1/level damage (to a maximum of 1d4+15) to anyone attacking you or caught in the field surrounding you, every turn. The field offers no protection against attacks from above as it only forms a whirlwind shaped tube around you.

black meteor strike

School Evocation [earth]; **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 6

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A piece of meteor).

Range Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level).

Area 40 ft.-radius.

Duration Instantaneous.

Saving Throw Reflex half. **Spell Resistance:** No.

A rent in space is torn and a fragment of the meteor, still in orbit around Abaddon, it yanked through at incredible speed and smashed into the target. The meteor explodes, filling the air with shards of meteorite. The strike does 8d6 damage/caster level to all targets within its radius and leaves the area scattered with razor-sharp pieces of obsidian requiring a Reflex save against a DC of 20 or those moving through the area take 1d4 damage.

black pit (hiding place between the planes)

School Conjunction (summoning) **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 6

Casting Time 5 minutes.

Components V, S, F (A hollow sphere).

Range Personal.

Target You.

Duration 2 hours/level.

Saving Throw None; **Spell Resistance:** No.

Access to the planes themselves is cut off from Abaddon but the space between the worlds – the prison home of the H'Laqu – can still be accessed. This spell punches a shallow hole in the skin between the worlds allowing the caster to hurl themselves into the void until reality snaps back, ejecting them from this unnatural space in the same place that they disappeared from. For every two hours they spend in void there is a 1-in-10 chance of being found and attacked by an Abyssal Arm.

black sand

School Conjunction (creation) **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 5.

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S.

Range 50 ft.

Duration So long as the caster concentrates.

Saving Throw Suffocation; **Spell Resistance:** No.

Black, glittering sand gushes from the caster's hands forming a 10 ft. cube of shifting, moving, razor-sharp granules. So long as the caster concentrates (doesn't move, perform any other actions and is not interrupted) they can move this mound of sand up to 15 ft. per turn. Anyone engulfed by the sand is held in place (unless they can make a Strength check against a DC of 20 to break free) takes 2d4 damage and must start to make suffocation checks, according to the suffocation rules. The maximum range from the caster that the sand can move before collapsing is 50 ft.

black talons

School Transmutation; **Level** Druid/Ranger/Sorcerer/Wizard 3

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S.

Range Touch.

Target Living creature/person touched.

Duration 1 min/level.

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance:** Yes (harmless).

Black Talons wreathes the fists or natural weapons of one person or creature in black, empty space. This confers a +1 bonus to damage and allows these weapons to ignore magical protection or the bonuses to Armour Class offered by spells and enchantments. This only allows the creatures attacks to penetrate and does not protect the creature from any adverse effects of any magical protections or fields – such as prismatic spheres.

dark eye

School Divination (scrying); **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 5

Casting Time 10 minutes.

Components V, S.

Range 1 mile.

Effect Magical sense.

Duration 1 min/level.

Saving Throw None; **Spell Resistance:** No.

With an incantation you can call into existence a fist-sized sphere of darkness which you can then project into shadowy areas within a mile. The orb act as a focal point for all your senses at a distance. The orb must remain within shadow and if exposed to either bright light or total darkness – rather than shadow – the eye is dispelled and the caster using it takes 2d6 damage.

emptiness

School Enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** Bard/Cleric 2, Sorcerer/Wizard 3.

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, M (a black pebble)

Range 20 ft.

Target 1 living creature.

Duration 1 turn/caster level.

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

This spell targets the spirit, the essential 'animus', of the target, opening them up to mind control, spiritual contamination and other dangerous effects. Once subjected to the spell then the next Will save – or save against H'Laqu infection – that the target makes automatically fails in addition to being dazed as per the daze spell. If a target resists this spell then they cannot be subjected to it again for 1 hour.

face of fear

School Illusion [fear, mind-affecting]; **Level** Bard/Cleric 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (token taken from fearsome creature).

Range 30 ft.

Duration 1 round/level.

Saving Throw As per fear rules; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

By taking tokens from dead monsters the character can take on an aspect of their frightening mien, gaining their fear rating temporarily. For the duration of the spell the caster is infused with the unnatural horror of whatever creature they have taken their token from, requiring creatures and people who are susceptible to have to make fear checks while within 30 ft.

immaculate dissection

School Divination (scrying); **Level** Bard 4/Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time 1 full turn.

Components V, S.

Range Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels).

Target One creature.

Duration 1 hour/level.

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

H'Laqu perception transcends the limits of matter, space and even time. By channelling such power through their own eyes a magic user can strip a target apart, understand them completely, understand their weaknesses and how best to assault them.

The target of the spell is exposed, allowing the player to view the basic creature write-up along with any information about its weaknesses. In addition the caster receives a +1 bonus to hit and a +2 bonus to damage against that target. If the target resists this spell, it is immune to further castings for an hour.

insignificance

School Enchantment (compulsion) (mind-affecting); **Level** Cleric/Sorcerer/Wizard 8

Casting Time 1 turn.

Components V, S, M (a magnifying lens).

Range Touch.

Duration 1 day/level.

Saving Throw Will negates.

The target of the spell is subjected to the terrible knowledge of their true insignificance in the multiverse. That they are of no more importance and significance than a mote of dust. This knowledge is crushing, even to the egos of beings who consider themselves heroes and demigods.

Those effected by the spell suffer the following effects:

- **Turns 1-2:** Helpless.
- **Turns 3-5:** Cowering.
- **Turns 6-10:** Shaken.

In addition to this effect the target is rendered suicidal by their exposure to the meaninglessness of their existence. Once removed from immediate concerns of survival – such as combat – the target becomes suicidal and will make an attempt on their own life. They must make a Will save against a DC of 25 each day for the duration of the spell or make another attempt on their own life.

life sign

School Abjuration; **Level** Cleric/Paladin/Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A sigil daubed in blood).

Range Touch

Area 10 ft.- radius circle centred on the sigil.

Duration 10 minutes/level.

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance:** No.

H'Laqu manifestations and those infected by their presence can be warded off by this spell which creates a protective area around the symbol created by the caster. H'Laqu and their tainted must make a Will save to cross the circle and those within the circle gain a +2 deflection bonus to AC against H'Laqu attacks along with a +2 bonus to all saves against effects stemming from the H'Laqu or powers derived from them.

mind trap

School Enchantment (compulsion), (mind-affecting); **Level** Bard 4, Sorcerer/Wizard 5

Casting Time 1 round.

Components V.

Range Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels).

Target One intelligent creature within range.

Duration So long as the caster concentrates or until the puzzle is solved or defeated.

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

This spell creates a magical bond between the caster and the target, entrapping the target's mind within a mental puzzle or challenge created by the caster. The caster can either

create a maze with a DC equal to their Intelligence score + Knowledge (Engineering) skill. The target must either wait for the caster to drop the spell or beat that DC a number of times equal to the maximum level spell the caster can cast.

Alternatively the caster can create a monster in their mind with a Challenge Rating equal to the maximum spell level that they can cast and force the target to fight it in their mind. Damage is real to the target and if the target defeats the mental monster the caster takes 1d6 damage per point of Challenge Rating and 2 points of temporary damage to their Intelligence.

planar shears

School Abjuration; **Level** Cleric/Sorcerer/Wizard 5

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V,S.

Range Medium (100 ft.+10 ft./level).

Effect Ray.

Duration 1 min/level.

Saving Throw None; **Spell Resistance:** Yes (object).

A flat, black ray, like a blade, projects from the hand of the caster and strikes the target, severing completely any ties between the target and the planes, even in the restricted sense in which such links are maintained on Abaddon. Any planar creatures are cut off from their contacts with the other worlds. Planar creatures lose access to their Supernatural powers and summoning from the other worlds along with Conjunction spells are disrupted by the spell.

shardstorm

School Evocation [N/A]; **Level** Druid/Sorcerer/Wizard 5.

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A large shard of obsidian to be thrown down and shattered).

Range Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level).

Area Cylinder (20 ft. radius).

Duration 1 round/level (Maximum).

Saving Throw None; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

As the shard shatters the fragments, along with others like it from the surrounding area, are drawn into a whirling shield of fragments that protect the front of the caster with a shield of debris. This shield can absorb up to 50 hit points of damage before being destroyed or can be used to hurl waves of fragments at targets within the area of the cylinder template. Every 5 hit points of shards sacrificed to an attack does 1d6 points of slashing damage to anyone caught in the area of effect.

squirring maw

School Conjunction (creation or calling); **Level** Cleric/Sorcerer/Wizard 9

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S,

Range Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level).

Duration 1 round/level.

Saving Throw None; **Spell Resistance:** No.

The magic punches a hole into the space between worlds to where a waiting H'Laqu form lurks. As the whole is punched the H'Laqu punches through the rift and tries to grasp, destroy or kill anything and everything that it can reach through the hole, feeding whatever it can get back through the portal to be destroyed.

The caster has no control over the 10 ft.-radius maw or the 2d6 Abyssal Arms that are summoned around it. The arms reach out to grasp and attack anything within range and try to feed them back into the maw. Anything fed into the portal is affected as though hit by a Swallowed By Darkness spell. The spell lasts for its duration and then ceases, the tentacles withdrawn, dropping whatever is in their clutches and the portal closing.

sterilise

School Necromancy; **Level** Cleric/Druid 3, Sorcerer/Wizard 4

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S.

Range Touch/5 ft. radius +5 ft.-radius/level.

Target Area around self.

Duration Instantaneous.

Saving Throw Fortitude negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

The immediate area around the target, them selves or a single chosen target are sterilised, instantly, of all bacteria, virii and other micro-organisms. This instantly cures any disease or removes any disease-based attacks from any enemies for the remainder of the battle. It does have the disadvantage of destroying useful, 'friendly' bacteria as well. Any living target hit by the spell suffers a -2 penalty to their Constitution which returns at the rate of one per week as they are 'reinfected' with useful bacteria.

swallowed by darkness

School Conjuring; **Level** Sorcerer/Wizard 7

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (a shard of broken mirror).

Range Medium (100 ft. +10 ft./level).

Duration Instantaneous.

Saving Throw Reflex negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

Magic tears a brief hole into the gap between the worlds and threatens to swallow up a single target, casting them into the void to be lost forever. The attack does 2d8 damage per level to a maximum of 40d8 but if this damage fails to reduce the target to zero hit points then they take no damage. If they are reduced to zero hit-points they are swallowed up and lost to the darkness along with all their equipment. Against objects the spell bites a 5 ft. radius, spherical 'chunk' out of the object. The spell has no effect on force or energy barriers. The spell only affects one target each time it is cast.

DARK STAR CRASH

STONES WOULD STILL FALL FROM THE SKY FROM TIME TO TIME, ILL OMENED AND TERRIBLY DESTRUCTIVE WHEN THEY HIT. MOST WOULD FALL IN THE RUINS AND WILDERNESS IN THESE TIMES, BUT THEN MOST EVERYWHERE WAS RUINS AND WILDERNESS SINCE THE CATAclysm. Still, THE CONTINUING FALL OF THE BLACK STARS FROM THE SKY KEPT THAT TERRIBLE, HISTORICAL EVENT FRESH IN PEOPLE'S MINDS AND GAVE THE MYTHS AND STORIES OF THOSE TERRIBLE TIMES EXTRA BITE.

SOMETIMES IN THE WILDERNESS ONE WOULD FIND GREAT SCARS IN THE LAND, SCATTERED WITH THE STAR-STONES AND EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE CONSIDERED CURSED THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE WILLING TO PAY FOR THE STONES; WARLOCKS, MAGICIANS, ALCHEMISTS AND MANY STRANGE CULTS ACROSS THE LAND. FINDING ONE OF THESE CRATERS WAS, THEN, A MIXED BLESSING.

DONAL'S CARAVAN WAS DOWN ON ITS LUCK, SO MANY SETTLEMENTS HAD DRIED UP AND DIED LATELY, TRADE AND HAVEN WAS SCARCE AND THERE WERE FEWER AND FEWER PEOPLE SEEKING TO TRAVEL. NECESSITY OVERCOMES CAUTION IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES AND IT WAS WITH MORE RELIEF THAN DREAD THAT DONAL CRESTED THE EDGE OF THE CRATER AND STARED DOWN INTO THE BOULDER-SCATTERED, STEAMING HOLE IN THE EARTH.

"TAKE SOME MEN AND GATHER ALL OF THE SKY STONES THAT CAN BE MOVED." HE GRUNTED TO HIS NUMBER TWO, POINTING DOWN INTO THE CRATER. "WE'LL BE ABLE TO RECOUP OUR LOSSES AND TRAVEL TO A MORE PROSPEROUS AREA IF WE CAN SELL IN ON KRONsBERG.

THE MEN MOVED TO HIS ORDERS, RELUCTANTLY. PICKING THEIR WAY DOWN THE SLOPES WITH ROPES AND SACKS, MOVING TO GATHER THE CURSED STONE UPON WHICH THEIR FORTUNES AND WAGES DEPENDED. THERE WERE SOME GOOD FINDS DOWN THERE, LARGER STONES THAT WOULD FETCH BETTER PRICES AND ACCORDING TO THE SHOUTS OF THE MEN SOME WERE STILL WARM, IT CANNOT HAVE FALLEN TOO LONG AGO.

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A CRY OF ALARM, DONAL TWISTED HIS HEAD TOWARDS THE NOISE AND RAISED HIS TELESCOPE, WORKING THE LENS TO FIX UPON THE SOURCE OF THE CRIES. THE GROUND SHOOK, THE STAR-STONE TREMBLED AND THEN CAME TOGETHER WITH A THUNDERCLAP, THROWING MEN IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THEY BEGAN TO RUN BUT, BEHIND THEM, SHROUDED IN DUST AND SAND, A FIGURE WAS FORMING, ROUGHLY AND CRUDELY HEWN, FORMED FROM THE TUMBLING STAR-STONE ITSELF IT WAS A MOCKERY OF THE SHAPE OF THE MEN WHO FLED FROM IT.

IT STRODE ACROSS THE CRATER, LIMBS LIKE KNIVES, BODY AS HARD AS STONE AND AS BLACK AS PITCH, HURLING MEN LIKE DOLLS, PULSING WITH AN UNNATURAL LIGHT THAT BURNED THE EYES. IT WAS TREMENDOUS, MONSTROUS, TERRIBLE AND UNSTOPPABLE. DONAL SHOOK HIS HEAD AND KICKED HIS HEELS INTO HIS MOUNT, SPURRING IT AWAY. THE FIRST RULE OF SURVIVAL, LOOK AFTER YOURSELF FIRST BUT EVEN DONAL WEPT AS HE HEARD THE THUMPS, THE CRIES, THE SICKENING THUDS OF THE GREAT STONE FISTS STRIKING THE EARTH AND THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING. NO REWARD WAS WORTH THIS.

void of despair

School Conjuration; **Level** Cleric/Sorcerer/Wizard: 5

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S.

Range 50 ft.

Area 20 ft. radius burst.

Duration 1 min/level.

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

This spell punches a hole in the universe through which a glimpse of the soul-destroying empty void between the worlds can be seen. Anyone caught within the radius of the spell is witness to that terrible emptiness and the ravaging and strange radiations of the other-space. This fills those caught in the area with despair and fear. Those affected by their glimpse of the darkness suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage rolls for the duration of the effect. Creatures and people who are unable to see are unaffected by the spell.

whirling void

School Conjuration; **Level** Cleric/Sorcerer/Wizard: 8

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S.

Range 50 ft.

Area 20 ft. radius burst.

Duration 1 round.

Saving Throw Reflex negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

Magic punches through to the space between universes and a whirling, sucking vortex appears, like a negative image of a galaxy, arms of darkness whirling around the yawning hole like a circular saw, cutting through and swallowing up anything within its radius. Everything caught in the area of the void or moving though it is hit as though by a swallowed by darkness spell and those within an additional 10 ft. of the void must make a Strength check against a DC of 15 or be dragged 5 ft. towards the void on the caster's turn.

whispering madness

School Enchantment; **Level** Bard/Sorcerer/Wizard 6

Casting Time 1 standard action.

Components V, S, M (A vial of breath from a sleeping person).

Range Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level).

Target One intelligent creature.

Duration 1d4 days + 1 day/level.

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance:** Yes.

The voice of the H'Laqu is channelled through into the mind of the target, whispering to their subconscious of forbidden knowledge and unspeakable horror, of the insignificance of the target's life, their world, even their universe. This erodes the target's mind and sanity over time, causing them to lose one point of wisdom and intelligence each day for the duration of the spell. If both statistics reach zero the target becomes irrevocably and permanently insane, catatonic.

monsters

The H'laqu are changing everything on Abaddon, spreading like an infection through the people and the planet itself.

This infection manifests in many ways and amongst those are the twisted and altered creatures that the H'Laqu have created or made manifest simply through their unnatural presence. Their experiments, their attempts to grasp and to understand the physical world have also created any number of twisted beasts and failed experiments that move ahead of their infection like a wave.

With the presence of the H'Laqu currently limited, many of these creatures seem to only be one other source of strangeness amongst many but as the H'Laqu presence spreads, so will these twisted and dangerous creatures and what is currently folklore and legend will become horrible, every day, reality.

H'Laqu traits

The H'Laqu are unlike anything else in the world and have certain unique traits and capabilities that are beyond anything else that adventurers might encounter. This makes them an individual and different threat that often require a very different approach in combat to creatures that adventurers might otherwise be used to.

unaligned

The H'Laqu are beyond such concerns as morality and exist beyond the binding terms of alignment as it is understood by most beings. The H'Laqu are unaffected by wards, bindings and spells that depend upon alignment for their effect and may use any magical item, regardless of its alignment requirements.

H'Laqu creature type

While the H'Laqu are outsiders, originating from beyond the material plane they have some unique attributes that affect them in their interactions with the world. Chief amongst these is their resistance to magical damage effects and their vulnerability to unalloyed reality.

- H'Laqu take half damage from spells and magical weapons.
- Non-magical weapons and attacks automatically confirm criticals against the H'Laqu.
- H'Laqu receive a +2 bonus to saving checks made against the effects of spells.

abyssal arm cr 6

XP 2,400.

Huge, Unaligned, Extraplanar, Outsider, H'Laqu.
Init -1; **Senses** tremorsense 30 ft.; **Perception**: +19.

defense

AC 20, touch 7, flat-footed 22 (-1 Dex, +13 natural, -2 size).

HP 57 (6d10+24)

Fort +11, **Ref** +1, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities H'Laqu traits.



offense

Speed 0 ft.

Melee 1 tentacle +10 (1d8+8/19-20) + grab, constrict (1d8+16).

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

Tactics The abyssal arm coils in shadow, waiting for something, anything, anyone to move within its reach and then tries to reach out, grasp them and crush them – if it perceives them as a threat.

statistics

Str 26, **Dex** 9, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12.

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 25.

Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Stealthy.

Skills Stealth +5, Perception +19; **Racial Modifiers** +12 Stealth in dark conditions.

ecology

Environment Any

Organisation Solitary, cluster 3-5

Treasure None (remains from victims at Games Master's discretion)

Abyssal arms are aspects of the H'Laqu infection, projected through from the space between the worlds or manifesting from infected land, built out of the rock as it is shifted and changed. Abyssal arms are part of the H'Laqu themselves and are used to defend their strongholds as well as to rapidly take and defend areas as they infect them and spread. A town overcome by the H'Laqu at high speed can find Abyssal Arms literally erupting out of the ground, spreading chaos and panic, crushing and destroying any Defense before it can truly muster.

Abyssal Arms are thirty foot long coils of dark material, studded with spurs – like thorns. They look like living shadow but they have a solidity that runs counter to their

appearance. Their touch is bitterly cold and their very presence seems to suck light and heat out of the area around them and they coil into these lengthening shadows, lurking and waiting to spring forth and attack their prey.

adventure seeds

- A large, grand merchant's house has become infected with H'laqu essence from an artefact held within the confines of his vault. Initially thought to be haunted – not an uncommon occurrence on Abaddon – the adventurers previously sent into the mansion to clean it out have vanished and so the merchant is looking for someone else to cleanse the house. While he probably keeps it close to his chest that another group of adventurers have failed, he will know that whatever is in there is uncommonly dangerous. Inside the house's physics, the relationship between the different rooms, has become mixed and strange and in every dark corner the shadows are coming alive and sending tendrils out, questing through the house and its surrounds, looking for prey.
- Deep within the cellars beneath an old sorcerer's tower a new magician is experimenting with the nature of the planar trap that Abaddon has fallen within, trying to find a way through. His cellars, dungeons and what remains of the broken tower is filled with imprisoned creatures and elementals that have become trapped upon Abaddon since its exclusion and deep in the very bowels of the tower he has managed to make some progress, punching through into the space between the worlds. Unfortunately for him this has allowed the H'Laqu to reach through and to begin to corrupt and take over his home with their tentacles. The very thing that the other magicians, who have hired the adventurers, feared might happen.
- A man stumbles from the wilderness, his flesh turning dark and cracked, begging for help, telling tales of having run into strange and terrible things in the wilderness. Even as people try to help him his body erupts, a walking breach into the space between the worlds, Abyssal Arms springing forth and laying waste to his would be helpers, his body a helpless puppet being moved by the tentacles, unconscious and helpless.

Bacterial macrobe cr 3

XP 800

Neutral, Medium, Ooze

Init -3; Senses Blindsight 30 ft.; Perception: -5

defense

AC 7, touch 7, flat-footed 7 (-3 Dex)

HP 50 (4d8+24)

Fort +9, Ref -2, Will -4

Immune Ooze traits

offense

Speed 20 ft (levitation).

Melee Slam +2 (1d4 + 1d4 acid)



Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks Absorb.

statistics

Str 10, Dex 5, Con 22, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1

Base Atk +3; CMB +3; CMD 10 (can't be tripped)

ecology

Environment Any

Organisation Cluster (4d4)

Treasure None.

special abilities

Acid (Ex): A Bacterial Macrobe's acid only dissolves organic matter and not stone, metal or ceramic.

Absorb (Ex): Damage that the Bacterial Macrobe causes to its (organic) enemies is gained as temporary hit points. If the Macrobe doubles its starting hit points, it splits into two, new Macrobes that continue their attacks.

A floating, squirming sac of protoplasmic fluid, the Bacterial Macrobe is the result of H'Laqu experimentation and the violent reactions of the planet to their very existence. The H'Laqu see little difference between animate and inanimate matter and their experiments often mingle the two. The Bacterial Macrobe is one result of this experimentation, a gigantic bacterium analogue that roams and spreads across the land, reforming the landscape in alien ways.

The Bacterial Macrobe is a sausage shaped, free-floating 'balloon' of churning, digestive juices, moving by whipping a large, whipcord, rope-like tentacle, grappling from point to point across the ground or twisting it to drive them along like a propeller. The Macrobes spread by latching onto and digesting prey, splitting into two new Macrobes when they've absorbed enough material to do so.

adventure seeds

- A large meteorite, a fragment of the same meteor responsible for the cataclysm, has smashed into the ground and carved a deep, deep crater into Abaddon's surface. The very depths of the planet have been exposed and rising from it, emerging from beneath the lava fields, have risen clouds of macrobes, actually the very 'life blood' of Abaddon herself, rising up to try and heal this terrible rift in its material. The planet is treating anyone and everything close to the rift as an enemy, her macrobes like white blood cells, attacking what it feels is an infec-

tion. This is laying waste to everything for miles and to stop it, someone must venture into the eye of the storm and heal the very planet itself.

- Deep in the hidden depths of the mountains the H'Laqu are experimenting, constructing a gigantic body in pieces. Head, arms, legs, organs. Loosely arranged, alive but not alive, built on a gigantic scale the interior of the body is like a giant model, helping the H'Laqu to understand the fleshly beings that they are now encountering. Everywhere within this body are swarming macrobes, following the patterns and flows of the body's 'pulse', all part of a great experiment that – hopefully – the adventurers can thwart.
- Water is scarce and often corrupted across Abaddon but it is essential to all life. The bacterial macrobes are no exception to this and a cluster of them have found an asis in the wilderness. They have replicated rapidly and the bodies of previous generations have calcified into a crust, a labyrinth, over the oasis. The place still swarms with the macrobes and other creatures that have formed a kind of symbiotic relationship with them, a new and unusual ecosphere unique to Abaddon. The oasis is worth a great deal, if it can be recovered from these dangerous and strange creatures.

black glass mites cr 2

XP 600

Unaligned, diminutive, vermin, H'Laqu (swarm).

Init +2, **Senses** Tremorsense 20 ft., Darkvision 30 ft., **Perception** +3.

defense

AC 19, touch: 16, flat-footed: 17, (+2 Dex, +3 natural armour, +4 Size)

HP 25 (3d8+6+6)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities Swarm traits, H'Laqu traits, **Immune** Weapon damage

offense

Speed 20 ft.

Melee Swarm (1d6)

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

Special Attacks Distraction (DC 15), Devouring

statistics

Str 3, **Dex** 14, **Con** 12, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 4.

Base Atk +2, **CMB** -; **CMD** -

Feats Toughness x2

Skills Stealth +4, Perception +3 (+4 Perception when using tremorsense)

SQ: Swarm traits, H'Laqu traits

ecology

Environment Any

Organisation Swarm

Treasure Incidental



special abilities

Devouring (Ex): Black Glass Mites are tenacious and deadly when they fasten on to their target. For each successive attack against the same target that they make they gain an additional +1 to hit and to damage as they burrow into the skin and cause tremendous harm to their victim.

There are many ways to overcome an enemy and great power and strength are not the only ways. Sometimes a giant can be toppled by something small or a chain of events stemming from a seemingly insignificant start. The Black Glass Mites are one such 'insignificant' start. In ones and twos they can enter caravans, slip under doors, climb into purses and spread, taking the H'Laqu infection with them. In a swarm they can strip a man to the bone and pour like oil, killing with a terrible efficiency which is hard to defend against.

Black Glass Mites a small, sharp, spindly, insectoid creatures about the size a fingernail, with six, sharp, needle-like limbs and a bladed little mouth. As a swarm they appear as a glittering black tide, like an oil slick, rising out of the black sand to cover and consume.

adventure seeds

- A glittering stretch of black sand is dotted with bones and the wrecked remnants of destroyed caravans. The sand is the perfect cover for a seething horde of Black Glass Mites that are hiding beneath the surface, using the treasure and remnants of the caravan as a way to lure in more prey to sate themselves and to grow stronger and more numerous as well as providing valuable information about the many races of Abaddon for the H'Laqu groupmind. Will the adventurers be tempted across the sands? What if they've been hired to determine the fate of the caravan?
- A box, brought in from the wastelands by a scavenger, is full of a writhing mass of Black Glass Mites. When opened they pour out into the slums and begin to devour the people there. A swarm is a difficult foe to destroy, especially with so much cover and so many prey. The lord of the town orders the slums burned, but there must still be survivors in there, people who can be saved. Not to mention the mysterious box, whose origins might be discovered in time.

- Black Glass Mites are a good means for the H'Laqu to spread their taint into settlements. Resembling glittering black jewels some cultists have managed to tame them and set them into jewellery, trading them at various settlements leading to the rise of new swarms and the spread of the taint following the cultist's caravan route. Stumbling across one of these infected settlements and getting to the bottom of what caused the problem in the first place the adventurers are in a unique position to do something about it.



Little disturbs humans more than another human that is wrong, in some way. To the H'Laqu mind, body, life, unlfe, matter, energy, all are one and the same and to attack something psychologically is the same as attacking it physically or reducing a fortification to rubble. The Black Men are footsoldiers and harbingers of the H'Laqu, an interface through which they can speak, through which they can terrify, disturb, mislead and even negotiate when they need to. The Black Men are fully infected individuals, their bodies distorted by the sheer lack of understanding of the H'Laqu essence controlling them. They appear distorted, elongated or stunted, too many or too few joints, skin cracked and glowing, eyes impossibly deep and distant wrapped crudely in clothing that they do not fully understand the purpose of.

adventure seeds

- Vandar claims to have thrown off the control of the H'Laqu and comes bearing information about their threat, information that few know of and that nobody can really tell is true or not. He claims to know where a group of bandits, men like him, similarly changed, are operating and is willing to take anyone who is willing to trust him to see them and to defeat them. Whether he's telling the truth or whether this is an elaborate ambush or part of some twisted experiment remains to be seen but that someone truly can throw off the H'Laqu control completely seems manifestly unlikely. Perhaps, cruelly, the H'Laqu have given him the illusion of freedom merely to make him more convincing.

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black man cr 8

XP 4800

Unaligned, Medium, Humanoid, H'Laqu.

Init +9, **Senses** Darkvision: 50 ft.; **Perception**: +10

defense

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 10, (+5 dex)

HP 58 (9d8+18)

Fort +7, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities H'Laqu traits

offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee Darktouch +13 (1d8+2)

statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 20, **Con** 14, **Int** 16, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +8, **CMD** 23

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Nimble Moves, Stealthy

Skills Bluff +5, Climb +10, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +14, Intimidate +9, Perception +10, Stealth +19

ecology

Environment Any.

Organisation Solitary, trio or group (2d4+2)

Treasure Normal

special abilities

Darktouch: While Black Men can wear armour and use weapons they have a deadly touch which can be as fearsome as any weapon. As well as carrying the H'Laqu infection this touch requires the target to make a Will save against a DC of 25 or lose one point from every Attribute as part of their existence is drained away. These lost points restore at the rate of one per day but if any statistic is reduced to zero in this fashion then the target dies, fading out of reality completely.

Darkstep: At will, as a full-round action a Black Man can dissolve into the space between the worlds, disappearing from reality for a time before reappearing anywhere within 50 ft. The time lost between the worlds is random, lasting 1d4 turns, but gives the Black Man a chance to recuperate or to place itself in a position of advantage.

- Black Men come about from the infectious process of the H'Laqu invasion but this is a haphazard and unreliable process. Of late their cults and creatures have begun to capture, rather than kill, taking slaves back to a 'processing plant' that they have carved out of the rock. Here there are strange machines, crafted out of living beings and the energies of the other world, able to convert each and every person brought to them, reliably, into Black Men. This could easily mean an army of these strange and unnatural people in short order and, hence, the first stand-up battle with the H'Laqu, one that the survivors of Abaddon might be hard-pressed to win.
- A new village has sprung up deep in the wilderness, populated by men and women swaddled in cloaks, hoods and veils. This is another H'Laqu experiment, a settlement populated by their Black Men, trying to hide amongst the other humanoids and to find a place, trading, politicking and even warring with other settlements. These strange folk seem to have dropped into the world out of nowhere and should their real nature be revealed there may well be trouble.

corvidim cr 2

XP 600

Unaligned, Small, Animal, H'Laqu

Init +2, **Senses** Darksight 60 ft.; **Perception**: +8

defense

AC 15, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 11 (+4 dex, +1 size)

HP 9 (2d8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

offense

Speed 15 ft., **fly** 40 ft (good)

Melee Peck +6 (1d6+2)

Space 5ft., **Reach** 5ft.

statistics

Str 13, **Dex** 19, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 3

Base Atk +3, **CMB** +3, **CMD** 17

Feats Alertness, Stealthy.

Skills Fly +8, **Perception** +8, **Stealth** +10

ecology

Environment Any.

Organisation Single, pair or flock 6d6.

Treasure None.

special abilities

Link sight: What any member of the flock sees, all Corvidim see and any other H'laqu within a mile of the Corvidim can also sense what they sense – providing they have above animal intelligence. Corvidim themselves are surprisingly bright, about as intelligent as the average person and thus are capable of surprising tactics and intelligent use of their shared perception.



Many of the creatures to survive the disastrous impact of the meteor were scavengers and in the battles and strife that have come since that cataclysm, few creatures have survived so well as the crows. Little wonder then that these flying scavengers are amongst some of the first watchers and agents of the H'Laqu, keeping an eye on the populace, carrying messages for the cults and even attacking the vulnerable where and when they think they can prevail.

The Corvidim appear as outside crows or ravens with shiny glass-like beaks and talons, a metallic sheen to their wings and piercing, glowing blue-purple eyes. Unlike normal crows they are silent, rather than raucous and watch everything around them with an uncommon intelligence, that of the H'Laqu that squat behind their eyes, viewing everything.

adventure seeds

- A single crow has been shadowing the adventurers for some time, following them on their travels and watching them undertake their adventures, keeping itself at a safe distance. After a time they begin to find themselves harassed by H'Laqu infected creatures, cultists and monsters of increasing power and complexity. The crow is a spy, tracking them, making their location and movements known so that they can be tested and provoked towards some nefarious purpose.
- The sight of a battle between two tribes is bloody and empty of life. There are weapons and other things to be scavenged here but the bodies are attracting scavengers, many of which are dangerous to the living as well as the dead. Most prevalent of all are the crows, enormous and strange-looking, everywhere around the battlefield, perched on discarded swords and polearms. Strangely, though, the crows are not feeding on the dead. They are simply sitting, watching, waiting. Perhaps there's more to this battle – and the crows – than is immediately apparent and these crows - since they work together - can be very dangerous.
- Corvidim have been spreading across the land, making themselves available to magic users as familiars. While there are problems in channelling magic through them,

due to their H'Laqu nature, with less powerful magic users this is less of an issue and it's a means for the H'Laqu to gather information about magic and the history and workings of the world. It also puts them in a good position to destroy some of the strongest opposition the H'Laqu might face.

infected land cr 5

XP 1600

Unaligned, large, outsider, earth, elemental, H'Laqu
Init +4, **Senses** tremorsense 60ft., **perception** +6

defense

AC 19, **touch** 9, **flat-footed** 19 (+10 natural, -1 size)

HP 60 (5d10+32)

Fort +9, **Ref** +1, **Will** +6

DR 10/-, **Immune** Elemental/H'Laqu traits.

offense

Speed 15ft. (earthshift)

Melee Slam +14 (2d6+7)

Space 15ft. **Reach** 10ft.

Special Attacks Earth-surge

statistics

Str 24, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** 4, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +8, **CMB** +16, **CMD** 26

Feats Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Stealthy, Improved Initiative.

Skills Intimidate +2, **Perception** +6, **Stealth** +8

ecology

Environment H'Laqu held areas

Organisation Single/Trio.

Treasure Normal – treasure is often used by the Infected Land to draw in 'prey'.

special abilities

Earthshift: Infected land is actually a focal point, a strong – and vulnerable – point, within a larger area of corrupted earth or buildings. Within that infected area this focal point – or points – can shift, rippling through the earth and brick to defend itself or to attack interlopers. Earthshift takes place at the rate of normal movement, but is stealthy, allowing the Infected Land to make Stealth checks to disappear from view. No terrain counts as difficult and the Infected Land can ignore almost all conditions and traps at the Games Master's discretion.

Earth-Surge: When the Infected Land attacks, it attacks – mostly – by changing the environment. It can swallow people up, constrict them, create spikes and otherwise harm enemies within quite a large area. It's attacks are random and unpredictable, a D6 should be rolled to determine what tactic it takes.

- **1 - Column strike:** A column of earth rises from the ground and smashes into a single target, making a



normal slam attack with the Infected Land's normal combat statistics.

- **2 - Open Pits:** A series of pits open up in the earth, on every target within and 20 ft. radius. Each target must make a Reflex save against a DC of 20 to avoid falling into the ground and falling prone as well as taking 2d6 damage.
- **3 - Spike Eruption:** A cluster of spikes erupt from the ground in all directions, threatening to pierce anyone who cannot escape the eruption. Everyone within 20 ft. must make a Reflex save against a DC of 20 or take 1d4 spike strikes doing 1d4+2 damage each.
- **4 - Exploding Earth:** The ground bulges, erupts and explodes, scattering sharp fragments of rock in all directions. The explosion has a 20 ft. radius and requires a DC 14 Reflex save to halve the damage, otherwise the targets take the full 6d6 damage.
- **5 - Crushing Tomb:** The ground erupts around a single target and then slams together, crushing them in a chamber of earth and stone. A single target is struck and must make a Reflex save against a DC of 25 or take 8d6 damage.
- **6 - Building Strength:** The Infected Land does not act this turn, instead buildings its strength for its next attack, which is performed with +2 attack/DC and +2 damage. These bonuses can be built up over successive turns.

The very ground itself can become infected by the H'Laqu presence. It darkens and changes, becomes a 'living' thing underfoot, undulating, twisting, turning, erupting in strange ways, giving off strange lights, playing host to strange gusts of wind and shifting gravity. The land is wrong, unnatural, unsettling and – in places – it comes alive, swallows people up, crushes fortifications and manifests horrors and impossible landscapes that can drive a mortal mind mad.

Infected land appears twisted, peculiar, light moves across it strangely, day into night, night into day. Boulders may float or roll of their own accord, rock can flow like wax or water can be as hard as diamond. The land itself can erupt into spikes, open into pits and crush people who walk across it,

whipcord into tentacles to drag men down and drown them in the ground. It is no trap, but a living thing and can be killed – and cleansed.

adventure seeds

- The adventurers are present when the H'Laqu infection spreads into an urban area. This is a disaster on a large scale as the ground and the very buildings that make up the town are infected and start to come alive, destroying, killing, spreading from building to building, district to district. The adventurers may be the only hope that the townsfolk have to rally and drive back the malevolent force that is turning their own homes against them. With a suitably robust Defense the infection may even be completely driven out and the city cleansed of the infection.
- An old fortress, a survivor of the cataclysm, lies intact, deep in the wilderness lands. There are many maps and guides who claim to know where it is and many stories about the treasures and artefacts that the fortress may still contain. The problem is that the fortress is infected, alive, a honey trap, a 'pitcher plant' that can draw in explorers, allow them to get weakened by the other creatures that infest the fortress and then strike.
- The scraggly farmland around the city has become infected by the H'Laqu presence. Livestock – such as they are – have begun to disappear, farmers have been killed and crops have yellowed and failed. Survival, always at a thin margin on Abaddon, is pressed to the absolute limit and the city filled to overflowing with refugees from agricultural areas. A great bounty has been placed for the successful destruction of the threat to the people, enough to tempt glory-hungry adventurers and mercenaries both.

meteor golem cr 15

XP 51,200

Unaligned, Large, Construct, H'Laqu

Init +9, **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., **Perception**: +9

defense

AC 32, touch 14, flat-footed 27 (+5 dex, +18 natural, -1 size)

HP 129 (18d10+30)

Fort +19, **Ref** +13, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities DR 20/-

offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee Fist-spikes +32 (1d10+15/17-20)

Ranged Glass fragments +22 touch (6d10 slashing)

Space 10 ft. **Reach** 5 ft.

special attacks

Ground Wrench: In place of its normal attack the meteor golem can thrust its fists into the ground and yank it, like a carpet or a tablecloth. Antone within 60 ft., within a 90



degree cone in front of the golem must make a Reflex save against a DC of 30 or be thrown prone and take 1d6 damage.

Baleful Radiation: As a whole round action the meteor golem can stop, curl around itself, glow, and give off a lethal burst of radiation. Any target within 20 ft, alive must make a Fortitude save against a DC of 25 or lose 1d6 Constitution, Strength, Dexterity and Will as though struck by a poison.

Call to Kind: Once per day a meteor golem can send out a call, resonating with other meteor fragments and summoning them to itself to repair its form and to strike at enemies around it. The whirling cloud of debris come in like lightning, cutting through any enemies and healing the golem of damage that it has suffered. Anyone within 10 ft. of the golem takes 5d6 damage and the golem heals 10d6 damage.

statistics

Str 39, **Dex** 20, **Con** -, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +18, **CMB** +33, **CMD** 48

Feats Alertness, Critical Focus, Bleeding Critical, Staggering Critical, Critical Mastery, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (Fist), Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess.

Skills Climb +24, Intimidate +25, Perception +9, Stealth +10

ecology

Environment Any

Organisation Solitary, or in association with other H'Laqu creatures/infected.

Treasure Incidental

Not every part of the H'Laqu has been freed from their meteoric prison and many fragments, large and small, of that cataclysmic celestial body remain scattered around the surface of Abaddon. They can be brought together by cult magicians or by H'Laqu projections and fashioned into a tough, ambulatory golem, made up of large fragments of meteoric rock and obsidian, crudely held together and able to move, to smash, to cut and to flense flesh from living and dead alike.

Until they move, meteor golems can appear to be nothing more than a random pile of rock and volcanic glass. Once they move they unfurl into a crude collection of rocks and black glass, glowing with a faint inner light. Its fists are clusters of broken glass, centred around a central core of meteoric iron, capable of smashing or cutting with enormous strength, crude and constricted compared to most other H'Laqu manifestations, but powerful and dangerous enough for all that.

adventure seeds

- A collector is paying handsomely for meteor fragments to be brought to him and the adventurers are some of his favourite agents in finding this particular material. He pays them handsomely and over the odds for whatever they can provide to him over the course of several adventures. The latest fragments they have brought him contain enough H'Laqu essence for the meteor stones to self-organise into a Meteor Golem and strike out, shattering the collector's compound and threatening to destroy the adventurers and their patron.
- A meteor strikes the city, shattering a slum and setting the whole quarter ablaze. The people are in a panic, the slum dwellings burning and collapsing and, in the middle of all this chaos and destruction a terrible stone giant arises, worsening the situation and exploiting the disorder created by the wholesale death to cause terrible damage, lashing out in a frenzy of hatred and sheer exultation at being free.
- One of the chief 'missions' of the existing H'Laqu agents and creatures is to recover fragments of the cataclysm meteor and the newer fragments that have fallen to Abaddon since. Many of these are being stored in depositories, fortresses and dungeons taken over by the H'Laqu. An assault on such a collection point would do a huge amount to set back the H'Laqu plans but any such assault must get past some fierce Defenses, not least of which columns of meteoric stone which, at a moment's notice, can come to life as terrible engines of destruction.

nyxxus the surgeon cr 30

XP 9,830,400

Unaligned, Large, Humanoid, H'Laqu

Init +5, **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., **Perception** +36

defense

AC 10, touch, flat-footed (-1 Large)

HP 195 (30d8+60)

Fort +28, **Ref** +26, **Will** +38

Defensive Abilities H'Laqu traits

Dark Shell: Three times per day Nyxxus may summon reservoirs of dark energy from the space between the worlds and protect himself with a sphere of negative space that distorts the area around him. This effect lasts up to ten turns, though it can be stopped sooner if Nyxxus so wishes. This effect incurs a 95% miss chance on all direct ranged and magical attacks, provides a +4 bonus to saves against indirect or area effects and provides a +8 deflection bonus to Nyxxus' AC.

Absorption: Attacks that do dark, cold or negative energy damage are instead absorbed, healing Nyxxus' hit points. In dark (night time) or cold (sub zero) conditions he regenerates 4 hit points every turn.

Reincarnation: If destroyed, Nyxxus reconstitutes within the body of another infected humanoid in 1d12 months.

Deep Analysis: Each consecutive turn of combat that Nyxxus engages with a singular foe he gains +1 to hit, damage and to his own AC while remaining engaged with that foe, to a maximum of +5. Changing targets resets the counter to zero.

offense

Speed 40 ft. Levitate 10 ft.

Melee Claws +27 (1d6+4), Flensing Tentacles +27 (1d4+4/18-20)

Ranged Negaspear 50 ft. range +24 (2d10/19-20/x3)

Space 5 ft. **Reach** 10 ft.

special attacks

Flensing Tentacles: A burst of short, waving tentacles appears from Nyxxus arm and strips away skin and flesh down to the bone with disturbingly quick strokes. This strikes 1d6 times in a single successful hit.

Negaspear: With a raised hand Nyxxus summons a bolt of the very nothingness from which he came. This reaches out and strikes, punching through just about anything and leaving terrible wounds all the way through. This strike may be used to sunder at the same time as doing its normal damage, without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Dark Alliance: Nyxxus is a walking breach in reality and as such, up to three times per day he can summon forth 1d4 Abyssal Arms to aid him.

statistics

Str 18, **Dex** 12, **Con** 16, **Int** 20, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +23, **CMB** +28, **CMD** 39

Feats Alertness, Critical Focus, Bleeding Critical, Blinding Critical, Critical Mastery, Deafening Critical, Sickening



Critical, Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical, Tiring Critical, Exhausting Critical, Deceitful, Iron Will, Improved Initiative, Persuasive.

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +22, Craft (biomechanics) +38, Diplomacy +32, Fly +21, Intimidate +32, Perception +36, Sense Motive +34, Stealth +11.

ecology

Environment Any

Organisation Solo or combined with other H'Laqu minions.

Treasure None.

special abilities

Spell Replication: Nyxxus unnatural science can replicate ten levels of spells in each encounter and he can repeatedly 'cast' these spells without restriction. Each spell takes the form of a biome-

chanical or otherworldly scientific device but only H'Laqu may use these.

Nyxsus the Surgeon was one of the first to be infected by the H'Laqu and is a powerful embodiment of the H'Laqu desire to understand and dismantle the material world, the multi-verse, everything that they can about the dimension of existence that they have escaped to. Of the original man that the H'Laqu have possessed virtually nothing is left. A distorted and twisted body that seems stretched and distorted, like a scarecrow, unnaturally jointed, flesh of purest black, broken up by cracks across the surface of his flesh like the surface of a magma field, the unnatural light of the H'Laqu glowing through the cracks. Wreathed in cloth that shows the light of distant spheres Nyxsus eyes burn in his head and this gaunt, terrible figure stalks the land like a force of nature, dissecting, destroying, experimenting and searching for knowledge and understanding in an endless and slowly rolling tide of destruction.

adventure seeds

- Word comes out of the rotting forests of a strange and terrible figure stalking down from the north, pausing only to rend and kill and break apart any and every living thing in its path. This has caused a great exodus of people and animals, fleeing from the unnatural figure and its destructive actions. The consequences of this, creatures and people displaced from the forest, provide plenty of opportunities for adventurers in dealing with monsters and people out of their place. Once that is dealt with there will be a need to see what truth there is to the rumours and what strange threat this peculiar figure truly represents.
- Nyxxus, as representative and avatar of the greater H'Laqu mind, has discovered most of what he can from dissection and biological experimentation. Information of a different and 'higher' type now needs to be extracted by newer methods – torture, diplomacy and discussion. To these ends Nyxxus establishes a base of operations, deep beneath the ground and stocks it with H'Laqu creatures, cultists and people as well as captured representatives of as many cultures and people from around Abaddon as possible. These kidnappers range far and wide and their depredations must be countered, then there are those who wish important people to them rescued from the dungeon fastness, not to mention that adventurers themselves would be of special interest to Nyxxus for the information that they have.
- Captured by members of The Cult of Black Glass, the adventurers find themselves confined within an arena, a gladiatorial arena wherein Nyxxus is overseeing tests of some of his biomechanical augmentations and alterations to creatures – including humanoids. The adventurers are his choice to test his creations upon and as they fight and destroy each one the next one is adapted to their tactics and their strengths. Between each bout they are kept locked within cells and permitted to heal

but there may also be some opportunity to engineer an escape in those times.

BIOMECHANICS

BIOMECHANICS IS A CRAFT SKILL WHICH ENABLES THE H'LAQU TO MANIPULATE FLESH AND BLOOD OF SUITABLY PREPARED SUBJECTS TO CRAFT ITEMS AND DEVICES, REPLICATING THE EFFECTS OF OTHER CRAFT SKILLS AND ALCHEMICAL PROCEDURES. THIS SKILL CANNOT BE LEARNED BY NORMAL INDIVIDUALS WHO LACK THE TOOLS AND OTHERWORLDLY NATURE NECESSARY TO MANIPULATE LIVING FLESH IN SUCH A WAY.

viral macrobe cr 4

XP 1,200

Neutral, Medium, Ooze

Init -3; Senses Blindsight 30 ft.; Perception: -5

defense

AC 7, touch 7, flat-footed 5 (-3 dex)

HP 46 (4d8+28)

Fort +9, Ref -3, Will -4

Immune Ooze traits

offense

Speed 20 ft (levitation)

Melee Spike +5 (1d6+3 and Infect)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

special attacks

Infection: Covered with spines the viral macrobe, when it attacks and causes damage, inserts its own protoplasmic material into a living target. The target must make a fortitude save against a DC of 15 to resist the infection and if they fail to make this save then they lose 1d10 hit points after 1d6 turns, 'birthing' a new viral macrobe that starts with the same number of hit points that they just lost. Each fresh infection leads to the emergence of a new macrobe.

statistics

Str 14, Dex 5, Con 24, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 12 (can't be tripped)

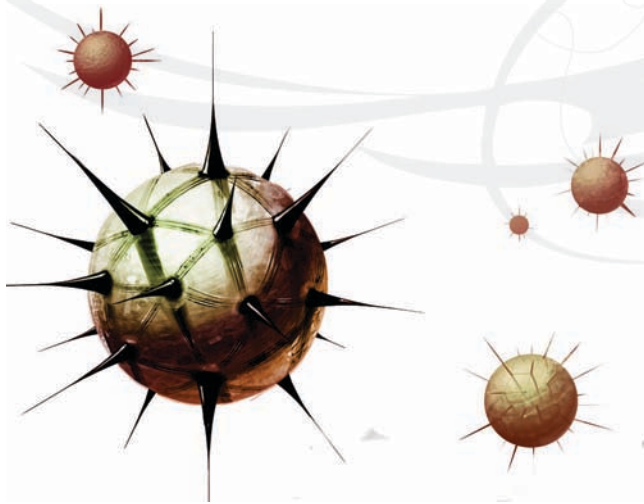
ecology

Environment Any

Organisation Cluster (4d4)

Treasure None.

Like the Bacterial Macrobes the Viral Macrobes are the result of peculiar experimentation undertaken by the H'Laqu resulting in gigantic versions of diseases that can sweep the land in a manner perhaps even more grotesque than their normal sized counterparts. Viral Macrobes inject their prey with complex organic materials which rapidly deform and repurpose the flesh of their target into more of their own kind. An encounter with a single macrobe can rapidly descend into a desperate battle for survival as men fall and burst asunder into more of the infectious creatures.



Viral Macrobes appear as almost spherical, football sized, free-floating orbs, covered in long, spines which are their method of attack. They are not remotely intelligent and attack on reflex, often operating in swarms that aggregate simply because they all act instinctively in the same way.

adventure seeds

- While the adventurers are sheltering in a farmstead from a storm, strange forms float out of the wilderness, driven by the storm winds and blow into settlement, the dangerous, infectious, Viral Macrobes. While the few that they initially encounter are relatively easily dispensed with others have blown into the scant fields and the herds of thin farm animals that they support. Those have been infected and consumed and a great swarm of Viral Macrobes has arisen to the cost of the farm animals. If they're not stopped and destroyed here they may spread far across the country.
- The adventurers are hired to capture one of these Viral Macrobes and return it to a researcher within one of the larger surviving settlements. Capturing such a dangerous and disturbing creature is challenging in and of itself, especially given how much they have become hated by victims of their depredations. Even worse, their sponsor is a member of The Cult of Black Glass and wishes to use the Viral Macrobe to reproduce more of its kind and then to unleash them within the settlement.
- The Viral Macrobes have completely overrun one important settlement but there are some reports of survivors, still managing to eke out a living, even amongst the swarms of Viral Macrobes. There is a chance that these people have some sort of natural immunity or have discovered a way to stave off the Viral Macrobes. Such information is incredibly important as these strange creatures spread across Abaddon and the adventurers are hired to look into the stories, to infiltrate the infected city, to brave the Viral Macrobes and the mysteries of the ruins in order to return with one or more of these individuals who are immune.

void elemental cr 5

XP 1,600

Unaligned, Medium, Outsider, H'Laqu

Init +9, Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Perception: +0

defense

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 13, (+5 dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, -1 size)

HP 60 (8d10+16)

Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +4

DR 5/-; Immune Elemental traits, mind-affecting effects

Special Defenses H'Laqu traits

Negative Space A combatant striking the Void Elemental in close combat takes 1d10 hit points of damage to themselves or to their weapon, but also deals an additional 1d10 points of damage to the elemental.

offense

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 slams (1d8+2)

Space 10 ft. Reach 10 ft.

special attacks

Abyssal Ray: The elemental crackles with energy from the space between the worlds which it can unleash in place of its normal attacks as a ranged attack at +13 doing 10d6 damage. If the target is reduced to zero hit points they are entirely disintegrated. A reflex save against a DC of 16 negates the effect.

statistics

Str 14, Dex 21, Con 14, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 11

Base Atk +8, CMB +11, CMD 26

ecology

Environment Any.

Organisation Single or cluster (1d4)

Treasure None

Not everything that comes across from the void between the worlds is the H'Laqu. Nothingness grasps for form, something spontaneously appears out of nothing just as the worlds themselves have spun out of emptiness. As the H'Laqu push through from the other side they bring nothingness with them and this emptiness takes form, even a crude intelligence. The Void Elementals are bubbles of this intelligent 'nothingness', free to float and roam and consume in a simple, animalistic search for substance.

Void elementals appear as free-floating 'holes', punched through reality, distorting light around them and granting a vision of the darkness of the void beyond. As they feed they become smaller and smaller until they are negated by the very substance that they seek to consume, tearing holes in material reality as they do so.



adventure seeds

- A breach is formed, punched through into the space between the worlds and from which Void Elementals begin to bubble and push through, disintegrating the world around them bite by bite, piece by piece. If this isn't stopped then these elementals will eat away the whole world and so somebody needs to venture into the changing and collapsing landscape to find and seal the breach in any way that they can.
- A singular Void Elemental has been captured within a bubble of magical energy where it can't absorb more matter or life, for study. This Void Elemental is much sought after by magical researchers, priests and alchemists across Abaddon and they are competing in bidding with various forces to capture it for their own personal study. Of course, its prison is very much dependent on a constant flow of magic and in stealing the Void Elemental and its prison, that prison may end up being disrupted.
- A magician has hit upon a means to extract the 'very substance of nothingness' from the Void Elementals and is prepared to equip adventurers with items that will give them the means to harvest this non-material from such Void Elementals as can be found. In hunting them down it becomes apparent that their appearance is also associated with the movements of a man, an agent of the H'Laqu given a means to draw the Void Elementals through from their place beyond the mortal sphere, testing and probing at Defenses throughout Abaddon for weak points that the H'Laqu can exploit.

the cult of black glass

Power attracts attention, envy, fear and worship. The unnatural power of the H'Laqu is no different. Even as they infiltrate themselves into the land and into the very flesh and

blood of the people, against their wishes, there are others who voluntarily turn themselves over to the H'Laqu, serve their ends and work to their purposes in exchange for power. Many are willing to sell out others for so little as not being consumed and taken over. Some even see the spread of the H'Laqu as an end to suffering and the right and proper death of Abaddon, a wounded world full of death, destruction and pain that has lived past its useful time.

Knowledge of the H'Laqu is slow to spread across the land and the cult exploits this lack of information in order to spread themselves ahead of and as harbingers of the H'Laqu infection itself. The cult helps to spread the taint of the other-world, finds victims for infection, spreads the infection to buildings and farmland, recruits people in positions of influence into their organisation and does what they can to disrupt and destroy any effective resistance to the H'Laqu before they come.

Apart from the name the Cult of Black Glass shares little commonality between its various groups. While some cults are a mere handful of people, others are made up of many members and can even operate openly in some distant and isolated cities. The cult can even operate as a fully fledged religion, complete with clerics, priests and flock, an apocalyptic religion that finds a strangely large number of followers on fractured Abaddon.

The Cult typically adopts the titles, religious paraphernalia and even some of the beliefs of the major religion within the area they are entering, even infiltrating the churches and temples and working from within their organisations, mirroring the physical infection of the H'Laqu with a social infection that undermines the spiritual and societal life of a settlement and corrupts it from the inside out.

CULT OF BLACK GLASS

WHILE THE H'LAQU ARE NOT GODS THE BELIEFS OF THEIR FOLLOWERS AND THE FEAR THEY HOLD TOWARDS THEM SEEMS TO MANIFEST MANY OF THE SAME EFFECTS AS WORSHIP OF THE GODS FOR OTHER CULTS AND RELIGIONS. AS SUCH CLERICS WHO TRANSFER THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE H'LAQU OR FANATICAL FOLLOWERS WHO TAKE THAT PATH GAIN MANY OF THE SAME BENEFITS AS CLERICS OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

ALIGNMENT: ANY – THE H'LAQU ARE BEYOND ALIGNMENT AND CAN CORRUPT THOSE OF ANY ALIGNMENT THROUGH RATIONALISATION AND SELF-JUSTIFICATION THOUGH USUALLY ONLY THOSE WHO ARE NOT OF GOOD ALIGNMENT.

PORTFOLIOS: IF THE H'LAQU ARE GODS THEN THEY ARE GODS OF DESPAIR, OF GIVING UP, OF ACCEPTING YOUR FATE AND TRYING TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT RATHER THAN DEFYING IT OR FIGHTING IT.

DOMAINS: DARKNESS, DEATH, DESTRUCTION, KNOWLEDGE.

FAVOURERED WEAPON: DAGGER.

adventure seeds

- The Cult of Black Glass has infiltrated the alchemist's guild in the city, rather than a religious organisation.

The perverse ‘science’ of the H’Laqu has been a useful worm to bait the cult’s hook and the combination of H’Laqu and human knowledge has birthed some strange and dangerous experiments. The guild – and thus the cult – is on the ascendant in terms of power, using their wealth and alchemical skill to bend the city to their will.

- The undead baron of this prefecture is a tyrant who fancies himself to be a god. He has his own cult, dedicated to massaging his ego and supporting his power structure through the worship of him as their figure-head. With a leader so fixated upon his own ego this is a great vulnerability that The Cult of Black Glass is all too ready to exploit. The baron’s priesthood is completely riddled with cultist agents and while he is blind to the infiltration, his vizier is not and is willing to secretly engage mercenaries to root out and deal with the problem, though this may make them a powerful enemy in the baron.
- The characters are members of The Cult of Black Glass, charged with infiltrating and subverting the city in exchange for power and special consideration. How they go about it is up to them but they are the first into the city, the ground breakers who must spread infection and corruption and try to play the various factions, including the rebels, off against each other in order to keep their enemy off kilter.

H’Laqu infection

The H’Laqu are corrupters. They have no understanding of the material plane and their presence is something else, an emptiness, a lack, a creeping darkness. In trying and striving to understand the material universe and to become part of it they insinuate themselves into it, becoming a part of it, twisting it from the inside out until it becomes something new, a part of them. The H’Laqu’s very presence corrupts the land, the people, the rock, the air, buildings, anything and everything as their presence spreads.

This is most insidious of all in people where the creeping darkness can be felt, experienced and undergone. Where the person can be aware of the infection as it spreads, the whispering of the empty ones in their mind and the slow slide of everything they believe as it dissolves away.

Mere exposure to the presence of the H’Laqu or their agents is enough for the initial infection to begin to take root, after that there is a slow spread, a change as the infection moves through the body, bit by bit, inch by inch, corrupting and changing as it goes. Most will resist the infection, the material world being as antithetical to the H’Laqu as it is. Of those who are infected, most will fall but some are able to resist, remaining partially infected, tainted but not overcome.

THE FIRST STEP

SELA HAD LOST EVERYTHING. HER FAMILY WERE DEAD FROM PLAGUE, HER DAUGHTER HAD DIED WHEN HER MILK RAN DRY AT HER TEAT. HER VILLAGE WAS GONE, DESTROYED AND BURNT BY RAIDERS, EVERYONE SHE HAD EVER KNOWN KILLED, CANNIBALISED. SHE HAD SEEN THE WORST THAT ABADDON HAD TO OFFER AND HAD SURVIVED BUT SOMETHING HAD DIED DEEP WITHIN HER, ANY SENSE OF HOPE. THESE DAYS SHE SIMPLY EXISTED, SELLING HER BODY ON THE STREETS FOR ENOUGH TO EAT AND DRINK, SLEEPING WHEREVER SHE COULD, SLOWLY BECOMING LITTLE MORE THAN A RAGGED SKELETON, EYES STARING A THOUSAND YARDS FROM UNDER A NEST OF MATTED HAIR, PREMATURELY WHITE.

TODAY SHE WAS SAT ON THE DUSTY STEPS BY THE OLD WELL, A FEW COINS SCATTERED IN THE DIRT BEFORE HER FROM THE GENEROUS SOULS WHO STILL BELIEVED IN CHARITY. HER MIND WAS VIRTUALLY GONE BY THIS POINT, RUINED BY ALL THAT SHE HAD ENDURED AND WITNESSED AND YET HER STORY, HER MISERABLE HALF-LIFE WAS IN NO WAY UNIQUE. THERE WERE DOZENS LIKE HER SCATTERED AROUND THE PLAZAS AND SQUARES, THE MAD, THE LOST, THE DISPOSSESSED.

A PAIR OF FINE BOOTS CAME TO A REST IN FRONT OF HER AND A HEAVY GOLD COIN FROM ONE OF THE OLD EMPIRES LANDED WITH A THUMP IN THE DIRT AT HER FEET, STARTLING HER FROM HER WAKING DREAMS TO STARE DOWN DISBELIEVINGLY AT THE COIN. NOBODY WAS THIS GENEROUS UNLESS THEY WANTED SOMETHING, SO SHE WENT TO PULL AT HER RAGGED DRESS, BUT THE MAN REACHED OUT AND STOPPED HER, HIS GLOVED HAND AS COLD AS ICE.

“YOU’RE NOT ALONE.” HE SAID, HIS TONES HONEYED AND SWEET, SOOTHING AND GENTLE, HIS HAND GENTLY STROKING AT THAT TANGLED MOP OF HAIR THAT SURMOUNTED HER HEAD. “YOU ARE WITHOUT HOPE AND THERE ARE MANY OTHERS JUST LIKE YOU, BUT THIS HAS ALL HAPPENED FOR A REASON. THE WORLD IS TO BE WIPED AWAY, THE PAIN WILL END, THE UNIVERSE WILL START ANEW. THIS ALL HAPPENED FOR A PURPOSE, THE GREATEST PURPOSE YOU CAN THINK OF. A NEW WORLD WITHOUT PAIN, WITHOUT HURT. WE CAN HELP YOU, WE CAN TAKE IT ALL AWAY, WE CAN GIVE YOU BACK YOUR PURPOSE AND MAKE YOU A PART OF IT.”

SELA BEGAN TO CRY, THE TEARS CARVED THROUGH THE GRIM THAT WAS CAKED UPON HER FACE. COULD IT BE TRUE? COULD THERE BE A REASON, A MEANING, A PURPOSE, AN EXCUSE FOR EVERYTHING TERRIBLE THAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER? COULD THERE BE A WAY OUT OTHER THAN THE SUICIDE SHE DIDN’T HAVE THE STEEL IN HER SPINE FOR? THE MAN REACHED DOWN AND SCOOPED HER UP. SHE STARED INTO HIS NIGHT-BLACK EYES AND NODDED. SHE WAS THEIRS.

infection getting infected

There are numerous methods by which a person can become infected with the H’Laqu ‘essence’. Exposure to the infected, close contact with H’Laqu creatures and experiments and the radiation from breaching points, as well as the use of spells that channel the energy of the space between the worlds. The mere presence of the H’Laqu is enough, their strange radiations and reality warping characteristics presenting a threat to anything and everything around them.

I stage one

At stage one infection a character is physically no different to any other person, the 'rot' and the change is entirely inside. Other than nightmares and the occasional 'voice' heard echoing in their head there is little hint that they are being overcome by something strange and dangerous.

- While at the first stage of infection the character's Constitution and Wisdom are reduced by -1 and a +2 bonus to Perception as their mind and body begin to erode and change beneath the H'Laqu presence.
- After a week the character must make a Will or Fortitude save against a DC of 15 or pass on to the second of stage infection.

stage two

At stage two infection a character's eyes turn black and their skin begins to darken as they're eaten up from the inside by the H'Laqu infection. Their mind also begins to undergo changes as their perception warps and the voice of the H'Laqu becomes stronger in their mind. Nightmares and whisperings are their constant companions and this can be extremely wearing to the psychological health of the infected.

- While in the second stage of infection the character's Charisma and Wisdom are reduced by -2 and they gain a +2 bonus to Perception. This replaces the penalties and bonuses from the stage one infection and it is obvious that they carry the taint.
- After a month the character must make a Will or Fortitude save against a DC of 20 or pass on to the third stage of infection.

stage three

At stage three infection a character's skin turns dark and is cracked with an unnatural glow from beneath the skin. Their eyes fill with a star-field and they are almost completely gone, become part of the H'Laqu collective consciousness. They are also now infectious themselves and in the case of a character, should become a non-player character - a monster under the control of the Games Master and even a key villain for the continuing campaign.

- At the third stage of infection the character effectively becomes a member of a new race. The details of this change are covered in the sidebar. You may even allow a new player to play a 'free' infected who has the traits, but not the full infection of the H'Laqu.

- The character gets one last saving throw, Will or Fortitude against a DC of 25, not to shake off the infection but to retain some vestige of their own personality and individuality.

THE SHATTERED

+2 CONSTITUTION, +2 WISDOM, -2 CHARISMA: THE SHATTERED HAVE AN UNNATURAL PHYSIOLOGY AND AN OTHERWORLDLY PERCEPTION, BUT THEIR STRANGE APPEARANCE AND DETACHED MINDSET SET THEM APART.

SIZE: THE SHATTERED RETAIN THEIR ORIGINAL SIZE THOUGH THEIR PHYSIOLOGY MAY BE DISTORTED. TYPICALLY THIS IS IN THE FORM OF DISTORTED LIMBS, AN UNUSUAL GAIT OR AN OVERTLY UNNATURAL OR BEAUTIFUL APPEARANCE.

SPEED: THE SHATTERED RETAIN THEIR ORIGINAL SPEED.

DARKVISION: THE SHATTERED CAN SEE PERFECTLY IN TOTAL DARKNESS TO A DISTANCE OF 30 FT.

UNALIGNED: THE SHATTERED HAVE NO ALIGNMENT AND ARE IMMUNE TO EFFECTS OR REQUIREMENTS THAT ARE RELIANT UPON ALIGNMENT.

H'LAQU TELEPATHY: THE SHATTERED ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER, WITH OTHER H'LAQU TAINTED CREATURES AND WITH AVATARS OF THE H'LAQU WITHIN 50 FT. BY CONCENTRATING. THEY MAY PERFORM NO OTHER ACTIONS WHILE ENGAGED IN THIS EFFORT.

OUTWORLDER: THE SHATTERED HAVE THE SAME IMMUNITIES AND WEAKNESSES AS OTHER H'LAQU INFECTED AND AVATARS. THEY TAKE HALF DAMAGE FROM MAGICAL WEAPONS/SPILLS AND GAIN A +4 BONUS TO SAVES AGAINST MAGICAL EFFECTS. NON-MAGICAL WEAPONS AUTOMATICALLY CONFIRM CRITICAL HITS WHEN USED TO STRIKE THEM.

immunity

If a character manages to throw off their H'Laqu infection at any of these stages then they make an additional Will or Fortitude save against a DC of 25. If this succeeds then the character's body and spirit have thrown off the infection completely and they are immune to further physical and mental infiltration by the H'Laqu. In most cases this will simply mean that the effects of the infection cease but at a stage three infection, a character that rolls a '20' and succeeds in throwing off the infection remains changed with all the abilities, bonuses and penalties of being one of The Shattered, but is free - mostly - of H'Laqu influence and is not a carrier.

adventure seeds

- The Cult of Black Glass has found a way to synthesise a toxin that all but guarantees H'Laqu infection. They have been using it on their weapons in a string of attacks upon public figures, attacks that have seemed to fail, leaving the targets merely wounded rather than dead. In fact, this has been their aim all the time, willing to sacrifice a few fanatical assassins in order to ensure that they turn people in key points of power, usurping them.

- As knowledge spreads across the land about the H'Laqu and the way that they can usurp someone's very flesh and mind, paranoia begins to increase. Anyone who even begins to show the merest signs of infection is outcast, chained with bells or branded with a sign of evil upon their brow – that is if they're not just killed outright. Given the numbers of the mentally infirm and insane and traumatised people on Abaddon, many of those so marked are not infected at all. Word has begun to spread, however, of a possible cure, found at a remote settlement and many of the branded and chained, whether infected or not, are heading there. The story may be snake oil, exploitation of people's desperation, or there may be some truth to it.
- A small 'tribe' of the Shattered who have thrown off H'Laqu control has been forming in the wilderness. Distrusted, hated, hunted – and with good reason – they hide as best they can and survive in the foothills. The adventurers are the latest group sent to eradicate them but, if they're willing to parley, they may discover that there's more to the story.

breaching points

A breaching point is a place where the H'Laqu have torn a rent from their gap-between-the-worlds into Abaddon and where their influence and their power is at its greatest. These are dark and uncomfortable places where the laws of physics and magic as people normally understand them are undermined and overturned, where reality itself is weakened and threadbare and where the infected horrors and twisted H'Laqu experiments roam in a constant scouring for food or more raw material for H'Laqu to experiment upon.

A breaching point is a rent in the very substance of the universe itself, exposing material existence to the raw potentiality and unending void of the space between. It appears as a darkening, as though the area in which reality has been breached is in the shade of a tree or a building, a dimming of the light and a draining of colour. Things begin to appear hazy, dream like, like the faded memories of a thing, rather than the thing itself. Objects begin to lose substance, to become porous-seeming, insubstantial, spongy. Even conscious entities – including adventurers – will feel these effects, becoming less sure of themselves, less confident and as though they are fading away, an effect similar to ageing in frailness of body and weakness of mind, albeit without the accompanying physical changes and recoverable by leaving the presence of the breach.

An existing breaching point is not normally manifested in physical effects, there is no rushing of air, no swirling vortex but, rather, a brooding, squatting presence. There is a feeling of being watched, the hairs might raise on someone's neck or the back of their arms. Their heart might quicken its beat and their legs might become weak, they may have a fright reaction without knowing why, jumping and starting at



shadows. When a breach is in the process of being created however, that is another matter entirely.

When a breaching point is being made there is an explosion of energy and a fierce wind storm. Magic using characters – any kind of magic – within fifty feet of the breaching point must make a Will save against a DC of 25 or take 3d6 hit points of damage from psychic feedback. Everyone within the area must also make a Fortitude save against a DC of 20 or be knocked off their feet, taking 1d6 damage and being dragged 1d4 x 5 ft. towards the breaching point. Those drawn into the 'event horizon' of the breaching point must make a Reflex save against a DC of 20 or be sucked through, lost – perhaps forever – in the space between the worlds.

breaching point side effects

- **Twisted Space** Space can become warped and twisted around concentrations of H'Laqu energy or the breaching points that they create. Corridors and rooms can become interconnected in strange ways and moving in one direction can take you in another.
- **Distorted Time:** Time can flow more slowly or with greater rapidity, passing near a breaching point can even hurl someone into the future or into the past. Typically time only moves between half and double speed and jumps are typically only forward and backward between one and ten days though more dramatic effects are possible, if the Games Master deems them to be good for the plot. A time travel adventure to pre-cataclysm Abaddon might make for an interesting adventure.

- **Nightmares:** Far beyond the range of their physical effects the breaching points create a much wider area of psychic disturbance. For miles distant from the point of breach people suffer disturbed dreams and restless nights. Particularly susceptible individuals, in particular those with psychic abilities of their own, may also suffer waking hallucinations and even temporary blindness – at the Games Master’s discretion. Saving throws to prevent these effects should be Will saves within the DC 15-20 range.
- **H’Laqu Infection:** To be exposed to the space between the worlds around Abaddon is to risk becoming infected by the H’Laqu presence. Each day spent within the influential area of a breaching point will require a character to make a check for H’Laqu infection.

Adventure Seeds

- A large breach has opened atop a high mountain. This hole in reality is distorting space and time severely around its aperture and, being so high up, it is interfering with the weather – such as it is on Abaddon – for much of the surrounding area. Seasons change day by day, blistering heat follows bitter cold and hail falls in the same instant that rare sunshine breaks through the clouds. This is ruining the surrounding lands – or what remains of them – and will make any assault on the mountain to close the breach terribly difficult.
- A huge breach swallows up the township in which the adventurers are taking shelter sucking them, the town and all its populace into the void. They will need to protect themselves long enough to find a way free of the void and back into the ‘real’ world, emerging through another breach though – perhaps – not the same one they entered through, the whole town having been translated across the world.
- A group of magicians want to sponsor an expedition into the void between the worlds. They believe they have discovered a means to move about within the void and want the adventurers to be their guinea pigs. The space between the worlds is full of the amoral forces of the H’Laqu but also the detritus of Abaddon that has been dragged through or devoured to be studied. Townships, hills, bodies, fragments of land, lost ships and caravans all tumble through the void to be explored, understood and plundered by any brave enough and willing to venture into the very realm of the dark gods themselves.



BREACHING POINT MECHANICS

BREACHING POINTS HAVE SEVERAL MECHANICAL EFFECTS UPON H’LAQU, THEIR MINIONS AND TAINTED INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THEIR IMMEDIATE AREA. THE REACH OF THE EFFECT OF A BREACHING POINT VARIES FROM POINT TO POINT AND EXTENDS AT THE GAMES MASTER’S DISCRETION BUT GENERALLY TO AN AREA BETWEEN 20 FT. AND 250 FT. FROM THE BREACHING POINT ITSELF.

H’LAQU AND THEIR MINIONS RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING BONUSES WHILE WITHIN THE AREA OF EFFECT OF THE BREACH.

- ✦ **+2 BONUS ON ATTACK CHECKS** – THEY ARE ENERGISED BY BEING CLOSER TO THEIR ‘HOME’ DIMENSION.
- ✦ **+2 BONUS ON DAMAGE ROLLS** – THEY ARE STRENGTHENED AND BECOME MORE SOLID AND ‘REAL’ WHEN THEY’RE CLOSER TO THEIR OWN DIMENSION.
- ✦ **+2 BONUS TO AC** – THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPACE BETWEEN THE WORLDS RENDERS THE H’LAQU EVEN MORE IMPERVIOUS TO WEAPONS THAN THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE BE.
- ✦ **REGENERATE 1 HIT POINT PER TURN** – NOTHINGNESS REPLENISHES THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR BEING, EVEN AS THEY ARE BEING HARMED.

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Written By: James 'Grim' Desborough

Cover and Interior Artwork: Ean Moody and Alejandro García Palomares

Graphic Design & Layout: Louis Porter, Jr. Design

Obsidian Twilight created by Louis Porter Jr.

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