

# Credits

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### Introduction

The Pathfinder Bestiary, and the long line of monstrous encyclopedia that came before it, do a great job of attacking the problem of providing game statistics and mechanical information for a very wide variety of creatures. There are a lot of strange creatures from fantasy novels and movies, from ancient mythology, and, as time went on, from the twisted minds of game designers and even GMs, for that matter. Anyone today who tried to go about creating an extensive bestiary of all the different cool and interesting fantasy monsters could fill three or four volumes with three hundred monsters each, and still have a long way left to go, with fans crying out for various "forgotten" monsters to get some attention. That kind of breadth doesn't leave a whole lot of room for depth, and that's where *Exotic Encounters* comes in.

There are all kinds of reasons why you might not want to use a monster stat-block straight from the core rules. For one thing, if your players have a habit of browsing through such books, or are long-time veterans who know the basic ins and outs of most fantasy staples, you may need an unusual stat-block just to throw them a curve ball and teach them that they can't count on their out of character knowledge to take all the mystery out of the game. Alternatively, many GMs can recall a time when they wanted to make use of a certain monster in their game, only to find that it was a few CRs too high or low for what they had in mind. *Exotic Encounters* takes a single, iconic monster, and creates three new variants on that theme. These variants aren't simple tweaks, and are more than simply advancing or removing Hit Dice, though that occurs as well. Each of these three variations on the monster's theme has a specific, flavorful goal in mind, and a role to play, and their statistics entries are gently massaged in order to make them fit those roles. Further, each of these variants comes with brand new specially-crafted special abilities, which are unique to *Exotic Encounters* and not found anywhere else.

This particular installment of *Exotic Encounters* focuses on the unusual darkmantle. These stalactiteresembling magical beasts are typically fodder for 1st-level adventurers, and are notable mostly for their annoying ability to drench the area around them in darkness. The first of the new exotic darkmantles is the death's hood darkmantle (CR 3), whose smaller size is not the liability that it initially seems, as it allows it to better conform to the faces of its victims. It attaches itself to its prey's face and quickly strangles it, then uses the corpse like a puppet for its own nefarious ends. The equally insidious shadow weaver darkmantle (CR 5) is more powerful in areas of darkness, and is surrounded by an aura that subtly lowers the light level around it. Finally, the goliath darkmantle (CR 8) is a huge darkmantle whose favored tactic is to drop from above on unsuspecting victims, and can grapple a large number of victims at once, weakening them with its acidic drool before swallowing them whole.

## Death's Hood Darkmantle

The creature before you vaguely resembles a small squid or octopus, though its body is slightly more conical in shape, almost like a slightly floppy, very rubbery conical hat. Tendrils extend from its base in every direction, and a ring of red eyes circumnavigate the midsection of the creature's otherwise black, featureless body.

#### DARKMANTLE, DEATH'S HOOD

#### CR 3

#### XP 800

NE Tiny magical beast

**Init** +6; **Senses** blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 size) hp 30 (4d10+8)

**Fort** +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Weaknesses light vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor) Melee slam +4 (1d3 plus grab) Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach o ft.

**Special Attacks** grab (Medium or smaller), suffocating grasp (DC 10)

STATISTICS

Str 7, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 10 Base Atk +4; CMB +0 (+4 grapple); CMD 12 (can't be tripped) Feats Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth) Skills Fly +7, Perception +4, Stealth +17; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception, +4 Stealth SQ tenacious grip ECOLOGY Environment any underground

**Organization** solitary, pair, or clutch (3-12)

#### Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Animate Victim (Ex): A death's hood darkmantle can attach itself to the head of a recently-deceased corpse and animate it, controlling it like a puppet. As a standard action, the death's hood darkmantle can attach itself to the corpse of a humanoid creature of Medium or Small size that it is adjacent to or currently grappling, which has not been dead for more than one week. The affected creature gains the zombie template for as long as the death's hood darkmantle is attached to it. The zombie takes no actions on its own, but as a full-round action the death's hood darkmantle can control the zombie, allowing it to take a full round's worth of actions (the staggered quality still applies). If the death's hood darkmantle becomes detached from the zombie for any reason (whether voluntarily releasing it or because it is slain or pried off), the animation effect ends and the creature becomes a corpse. The death's hood darkmantle's thin body ability applies while it is attached to the zombie in this way.

Light Vulnerability (Ex): Death's hood darkmantles are weakened by sunlight. Whenever a death's hood darkmantle is in an area of normal light it becomes fatigued for as long as it remains in conditions of normal light. Whenever a death's hood darkmantle is in an area of bright light, it is exhausted and suffers 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per round that it remains in conditions of bright light. After being removed from bright light, a death's hood darkmantle is fatigued for twice as long as it was in conditions of bright light.

Suffocating Grasp (Ex): When a death's hood darkmantle successfully grapples a creature, it wraps itself around the target's face and throat, potentially suffocating him. As long as the death's hood darkmantle remains in control of the grapple, the target is unable to breathe (treat him as holding his breath). Further, whenever it successfully maintains the grapple, the death's hood darkmantle can constrict around the target's throat, possibly hastening the suffocation process. The target must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 10) or begin to suffocate. A failure indicates that the target immediately falls unconscious (reduced to o hit points). In the following round, if the death's hood darkmantle continues to maintain the grapple, the victim drops to -1 hit points and is dying. If the death's hood darkmantle continues to maintain the grapple for one additional round, the victim dies of suffocation. The saving throw DC is Strength-based.

**Tenacious Grip** (Ex): A death's hood darkmantle's tentacles are deceptively strong and covered in a number of suction cups that make it very hard to remove once it is attached. The death's hood darkmantle gains a +5 racial bonus to CMB and CMD for the purposes of maintaining a grapple that it has already initiated, but not for the purpose of initiating or avoiding being grappled. Because these bonuses to not apply to all grapple checks, they are not included in the death's hood darkmantle's statistics.

Thin Body (Ex): It is virtually impossible to harm a death's hood darkmantle that is grappling a creature without also harming the creature it is grappling, as the death's hood darkmantle's body is quite thin, and clings closely to the target's face and neck. Whenever the death's hood darkmantle takes damage, if it is in control of a grapple, the creature that it is grappling takes the same amount of damage of the same type.

#### Ecology

Named for their tendency to wrap themselves around the heads of their victims, death's hood darkmantles are horrifying foes not only capable of stealing the breath from their victims—who are often attacked in an ambush in dark places—but can even animate and control the bodies of those who they suffocate, turning its victims into what appear to observers to be a faceless killer whose head is shrouded in some sort of black mask or hood.

## Shadow Weaver Darkmantle

You notice the room around you dimming, though all the light sources remain where they are, as though a palpable curtain of darkness had fallen over you. Looking up, your eye is drawn to movement, and you can just make out the form of what appears to be a midnight-black cone with several octopus-like tentacles crawling across the ceiling towards you. Its eyes glow with an unnatural dark light that defies explanation, and without warning it drops down, its tentacles reaching towards you.

#### DARKMANTLE, SHADOW WEAVER

XP 1,600

#### NE Small magical beast

Init +6; Senses blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft., lowlight vision; Perception +10

Aura aura of darkness (20 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size) hp 45 (6d10+12)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities cloak of shadows

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +9 (1d4+2 plus grab) Special Attacks constrict (1d4+4), grab (any size) Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6<sup>th</sup>) Constant—fly

3/day—ghoul touch (DC 12) scare (DC 12) 1/day—dispel magic, shadow conjuration (DC 14)

STATISTICS

**Str** 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 10 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +7 (+11 grapple); **CMD** 19 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Initiative

**Skills** Perception +10, Stealth +10; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

ECOLOGY

**Environment** any underground **Organization** solitary, pair, or clutch (3-12)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Darkness (Su): A shadow weaver darkmantle's body is suffused with magical energies that constantly shroud the area within 20 feet of it with darkness. The light level in the affected area decreases by one step (bright light becomes normal light, normal light becomes dim light, dim light becomes darkness, and darkness becomes magical darkness, as the spell *deeper darkness*). **Cloak of Shadows (Su):** As long as a shadow weaver darkmantle is in an area of darkness or supernatural darkness, it gains a +4 competence bonus to AC, and a +1 competence bonus to all saving throws. These bonuses are not included in its statistics entry.

Light Vulnerability (Sp): A shadow weaver darkmantle's spell-like abilities do not function when it is in areas of dim light or brighter, and it cannot use them to target creatures in such conditions. Its *shadow conjuration* spell-like ability only functions in areas of supernatural darkness (such as that created by the *deeper darkness* spell). Any creatures summoned by its *shadow conjuration* cannot leave the area of supernatural darkness in which they were created, nor can they attack creatures outside of that area. Similarly, its *shadow conjuration* ability cannot target creatures that are not in areas of supernatural darkness.

#### Ecology

CR 5

Shadow weaver darkmantles are an offshoot race of darkmantles that are usually only found deep below the earth, much further down than most normal darkmantles live. They are suffused with some of the strange magical radiation from these buried and forgotten realms, which has altered their bodies and granted them powerful magic. They lack the webbed body of the average darkmantle, and, as such, do not share their gift of flight, though this does give them much greater manual dexterity with their various tentacles, which are somewhat larger and more powerful, as they are the creature's primary means of locomotion.

More importantly, however, the shadow weaver darkmantle is suffused with magical ability, that allows it to perform a variety of feats that the average darkmantle is incapable of. While it is incapable of creating darkness (a generally unnecessary ability so far underground), it is able to fly magically while in dark areas, and it can easily scare away predators and paralyze prey for a swift kill. When truly threatened, shadow weaver darkmantles are capable of molding shadows to create shadowy defenders that can protect them from predators that they are unable to flee from.

Despite their expanded magical ability, shadow weaver darkmantles are not particularly more intelligent than standard darkmantles, and have only basic animal intelligence. They tend to be very territorial, and will fight with each other and other predators in their subterranean realms for prime hunting spots. They primarily prey on creatures smaller than themselves, but have been known to attack and eat humanoids, on occasion, and will certainly attack if they think that their territory is being threatened.

# Goliath Darkmantle

Looking up, you see a massive creature with pale, rubbery-grey skin. Its body is immense, and resembles some sort of octopus or squid, tightly gripping the ceiling, its tentacles fanned out in every direction, clutching stalactites and reaching into crevices. A thin, fleshy membrane connects the tentacles from the base of the creature's body out to about half of their length. Almost as soon as you notice it, it lets out a shriek and releases its hold on the ceiling, plummeting down towards you.

DARKM	ANTLE.	GOU	IATH
		<b>UOL</b>	

#### CR 8

#### XP 4,800

NE Huge magical beast

Init +6; Senses blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 18 (+2 Dex, +10 natural, -2 size) hp 105 (10d10+50)

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +4

DR 5/magic

OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor) **Melee** slam +14 (2d6+6 plus grab) and bite +14 (1d8+6 plus acid drool)

**Special Attacks** acid drool, ambush drop, grab (any size), swallow whole (4d6 acid damage, AC 15, 9 hp)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5<sup>th</sup>)

3/day—blur, deeper darkness, invisibility (self only) 1/day—hallucinatory terrain (DC 16), illusory wall (DC 16)

STATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 14 Base Atk +10; CMB +18 (+22 grapple); CMD 30 (can't be tripped) Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Fly), Skill Focus (Stealth), Toughness

Skills Climb +14, Fly +10, Perception +17, Stealth +14; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

SQ multi-grapple

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground Organization solitary, pair Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid Drool (Su): A goliath darkmantle's saliva is highly acidic and produces noxious fumes. Any creature hit by its bite attack suffers 2d6 points of acid damage and must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 19) or suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls, AC, CMB, CMD, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks for 1d4 rounds. Additionally, the goliath darkmantle's open maw constantly drips and dribbles its acidic saliva. As a free action once per round, the goliath darkmantle can force all creatures directly beneath it to succeed on a Reflex save (DC 19) or suffer acid damage as though they had been bitten. Characters damaged in this way must also make a Fortitude save to resist the secondary effect. The goliath darkmantle must have line of effect to a creature in order to affect the creature with this ability. The saving throw DCs are Constitution-based.

Ambush Drop (Ex): Goliath darkmantles hunt primarily by dropping down on unsuspecting prey, crushing them beneath its body and grabbing them with its webbed tentacles. As a standard action, a goliath darkmantle that is flying or climbing on a ceiling can fall up to 120 feet and slam into creatures directly below it. Any creatures in the squares that the goliath darkmantle lands in can make an attack of opportunity as it enters their square, if they are not flat-footed. Alternatively, characters that are not flatfooted can attempt a Reflex save (DC 19) to move out of the way, in which case they are deposited prone in the nearest unoccupied square. A character cannot do both.

Any characters still in the area when the goliath darkmantle hits suffer 4d6+12 points of bludgeoning damage, plus an additional point of damage for every 10 feet the goliath darkmantle fell. A successful Reflex save (DC 19) halves this damage. The goliath darkmantle takes half the normal amount of falling damage for the distance fallen (roll the fall damage normally, then halve the result, rounded down). Additionally, the goliath darkmantle can attempt to initiate a grapple as a free action against each creature that failed its Reflex save to halve the damage (the normal -2 penalty for using its multi-grapple ability applies).

**Multi-Grapple (Ex):** A goliath darkmantle's webbed tentacles allow it to grapple many creatures simultaneously. The goliath darkmantle is capable of maintaining multiple separate grapples at the same time. For each grapple beyond the first, the goliath darkmantle suffers a -2 penalty to its CMB and CMD for the purposes of each of the grapples that it is involved in.

#### Ecology

Goliath darkmantles are one of the greatest terrors of the deep places of the earth. Ambush predators, they lie in wait on the ceilings of large, vaulted underground caverns, or, in particularly large chambers, fly about in a listless wandering. Either way, when they spot prey they drop down upon it in a sudden burst of speed, crushing their victim with their body and using the element of surprise to get a hold of their victim. Often the first clue a victim receives that it is being stalked by a goliath darkmantle is the creature's noxious spittle raining down on it from above, and by then it is too late.

Much more intelligent than lesser darkmantles, it is not uncommon for goliath darkmantles to position themselves in such a way as to be worshipped by primitive underground-dwelling tribes of humanoids like orcs, goblins, and kobolds, who routinely provide the creatures with sacrifices in exchange for their protection (and not being eaten themselves). Permission to copy, modify and distribute the files collectively known as the System Reference Document ("SRD") is granted solely through the use of the Open Gaming License, Version 1.0a.

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# Exotic Encounters: Darkmantles

There are all kinds of reasons why you might not want to use a monster stat-block straight from the core rules. For one thing, if your players have a habit of browsing through such books, or are long-time veterans who know the basic ins and outs of most fantasy staples, you may need an unusual stat-block just to throw them a curve ball and teach them that they can't count on their out of character knowledge to take all the mystery out of the game. Alternatively, many GMs can recall a time when they wanted to make use of a certain monster in their game, only to find that it was a few CRs too high or low for what they had in mind.

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