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THE ASHEN KING

JEFF LEE & EWAN CUMMINS





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Hail the Ashen King!

One might say that the deep dwarves view the Ashen King as a necessary evil. According to the myths surrounding *Him*, the Cataclysm that *He* caused was necessary, a way of staving off an even greater apocalypse that could have destroyed all life. The world may be broken, but it is not destroyed, and folk have the Ashen King to thank for this. Some go so far as to say that the other gods did nothing to prevent his actions, or that He in fact disobeyed the gods, who would rather the greater apocalypse arrive. If this is the case, they argue, then all dwarves, indeed all



races still alive due to the actions of the Ashen King should praise his glory and abandon the other gods as they would have abandoned the people of Celmae. According to the Creed of the Iron Crown, all should hail the Ashen King and bow to his dark glory. Those who do not can go into the dark and the fire; the ashes of the betrayers and nonbelievers will be trod beneath His boots.

FOLLOWERS OF THE CREED

Those who follow the Creed of the Iron Crown are predominantly dwarven, and they are found among both deep dwarves and surface dwarves, though their numbers are greater among the duergar, who still dwell in the dark places beneath the earth where the Ashen King once walked and his power is still strongest. Underground, the followers of the Creed operate openly, for they are usually respected and always feared. Where the Creed's followers hold sway, the Ashen King's priests rule, a tightly ordered theocracy led by the most powerful of the Ashen King's worshippers. First, they ensure the safety of the Ashen King's people, protecting them from the horrors that stalk the dark places beneath the earth. Second, they brave the deeps to mine the wealth that the Ashen King holds dear, decorating his holy places and filling the treasuries with the bounty won through his dark grace. Finally, they ensure that the Ashen King's dominance is not threatened. No other faith holds right to claim worship from any of the Ashen King's followers. Any rival religious factions are rooted out and dealt with, with swift finality.

The Ashen King is not exclusively venerated by deep dwarves. Kobolds offer the blood of gnome captives on the rock altars of The Master with Garnet Eyes, the god who freed their forebears from gnomish slavery. The strange, aberrant adherers speak of him as the Leaden Hand, or the One That Sloughs Skin, praising Him for shaping them from leprous rabble. Human miners whisper about The Hell Candle, the Master of Mysteries hidden deep below. They claim to hear the hidden god's wisdom in the murmur of streams that never see sunlight, and follow his infernal spirit lights to secret caches of wealth. But his revelations come at a cost, and he demands blood for silver and gold.

THE CREED OF THE IRON CROWN

המתואה הצוחבים האמו המתואה העותה הב

We follow the shadowed path of He who destroyed the world and saved it, Who died and rose again to claim His birthright.

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He rewards His faithful with might and riches, And to those who spurn His might and His right to rule, Shall feel the fire, know the darkness, and be the ash beneath His feet.

We are His faithful, His chosen, Who toil for His glory and know not his dread. We praise his strength, and fear not the approach of his ironshod tread, For He shall pass us by and anoint us, His worthy, Before passing on to judge the unbeliever.

Let those who are wise recognize His glory, And do their service, and toil, and sing. Let those who are foolish be revealed as unworthy, And wither to dust beneath the gaze of the Ashen King.

THE GRAY HAND BANDITS

Long ago, the aberrant creatures known as Adherers were human beings afflicted with a species of leprosy. Driven from their homes at the edge of the desert, they took refuge in caverns where they discovered underground wells and slimy pits.

For years lepers eked out a wretched existence as scavengers, hunters, and roadside beggars. Bitterness and hatred for normal, healthy folk grew in their hearts. When a sinister voice began to speak to them, whispering from the deepest well within their cavern lair, many listened and obeyed.

The once-pathetic lepers became ruthless, wellorganized bandits. Wrapped in slimy bandages that slowed the progress of their disease and protected them from sunburn and heatstroke, the leper-brigands terrorized the caravan routes. They always left a gray hand painted on a stone, a broken wagon, a dead man, or some other thing at the site of one of their attacks. And after each raid or ambush, they fell back to their underground where lair, where darkness and fear of disease discouraged all but the bravest pursuers.

And then, as suddenly as the attacks had begun, the bandaged outlaws withdrew to their caverns and disappeared from history for two centuries.

When they emerged again, they were no longer human...

KOBOLDS

Long before the Shattering, gnomes beneath the world fought for survival against the horrific gugs. In the struggle the small folk created new magics, and employed their strongest weapons against the giants. They captured subterranean beasts and savage humanoids, using them as shock troops, most often to cover a hasty retreat. Chief among these servants were the crimson hued, reptilian kobolds. Initially feral, craven creatures with low cunning, they made excellent sentries, their fearful chittering an alert to approaching danger.

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After the cataclysm, a vindictive voice called out to the kobolds from the cave walls of their prisons. When they responded they witnessed two ruby eyes open in the stone. The voice whispered to them the secrets of language and blessed them with intelligence. Using their gifts, the kobolds rebelled, abandoning their former masters to the rampaging gugs. With their shock troops gone, several gnome kingdoms were decimated by the four-armed giants, placing the race on the cusp of extinction.

To show the Master with Garnet Eyes their eternal gratitude, kobolds set traps that collapse tunnels onto sentient beings, preferably dwarves and gnomes, for nothing pleases their patron more.

THE HELL CANDLE OF BRYNNDELL

When down-on-his-luck explorer Dirius Kane found a virgin silver mine in the foothills of Bright Mountain, he thanked the gods. Granted with the rights to collect the ore, Kane wasted no time, hiring men and purchasing equipment. Within a season, due to the mine's silver output, he'd become one of the richest man in Brynndell. His workers however did not share his good fortune.

Collecting the silver was making them sick.

Strange azure dust was cast off from the silver, and the workers complained breathing it gave them headaches and turned their teeth blue. They begged Dirius to improve conditions, but flush with gold for the first time, he refused. He paid them enough already, he said.

The next season, production from the mine abruptly stopped. Fearing a mutiny, Dirius brought armed men to investigate. They found the mine abandoned, but saw hellish lights dancing in the tunnels. Following them to the lowest cavern, they discovered all of the missing silver heaped in a massive pile. Approaching the treasure, the corpses of the missing miners burst from the ore and attacked, collapsing the tunnel upon Dirius and his wealth.

To this day, workers in mines fear the Hell Candle and his fiery, wisp servants. They know that their appearance is an ill omen and a warning, that their master has claimed their tunnels as his own.



GREY ORCS

Before the Shattering, the surface of the continent now called Brynndell, was home to Mur K' Hov, the largest orc empire the world had ever seen. Ruling over their human slaves from massive stone pyramids, the orcs made war on their neighbors, impaling their dead on long pikes to mark the border of their realm. Not even giants could stand against the overwhelming numbers of the orcish horde. From the top steps of their pyramids, shamans dedicated to Rullux and Shub-Niggurath, decapitated thousands of sacrifices for their glory.

The orcs settled near volcanoes, citing them as embodiments of godly power. They claimed their proximity provided divine boons, giving them strength over their foes. When the cataclysm broke the world, the Mur K'Hov empire was obliterated, its survivors scattered across the fractured surface. They tried to regroup, retreating to Boneshrike fortress at the base of Mt. Kroesh, but the volcano provided no sanctuary as hoped. For two long years after the Shattering, earthquakes plagued the region, shaking the stone fortress from its foundations. Then the mountain

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erupted, spitting fire and ash into the sky. Molten lava flowed over Boneshrike, melting the remains of the keep and all remaining.

Only a handful survived the devastation, fleeing underground when the quakes first began. They wandered the dark tunnels, slowly starving to death. Their leader, the proud warlord Garrok Slatetusks, struggled to save them, but as the end approached, he was o0vercome with despair. He called out for the gods to save him and his people, the first time he's ever lowered himself to begging.

His prayers were answered.

Continuing their decent, the orcs stumbled upon a well filled with blood and ash. A voice called to them from the depths, revealing that it had caused the ruin of their race so they could be born anew as his servants. It beckoned them to drink from the well, and Garrok obeyed. His skin sloughed off, his exposed, corded muscles turning the color of ash. His eyes became milky orbs, and his tusks split and cracked, filling with a blackish-silver ore. His followers joined him, imbibing the well's horrid contents. Transformed, the grey orcs proliferated throughout the world below, spreading the destructive will of the Ashen King.

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THE ASHEN KING

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Domains: Death, Earth, Evil, Fire Subdomains: Catastrophe, Metal, Ash, Greed Symbols: A blackened skull with a scythe in it's mouth (Brynnish, most other common civilized races), crown of black iron (Dwarves), fire-blackened rat skull with garnets in the orbits (Kobolds), grasping hand (Adherers) Garb: ashes smeared on face and hands (Brynnis), gray robes and metal-toed boots (Dwarves), loincloths, necklaces of charred vermin sacrifices (Kobolds), lead pectoral in shape of clutching hand, glued to body (Adherer)

Favored Weapons: pick, scythe

Worship and Holidays: any important occasion: after a disaster, before a battle, opening a new shaft, cremating the dead. Sacrifices or flesh offered by burning, treasure offered by ritual burial.

Typical Worshippers: Duergar and renegade Dwarves; Kobolds; Adherers; miners, gong-farmers, rat-catchers, sappers, treasure hunters, thieves

Centers of Worship: The Ashen King is served by evil humans and humanooid cultures throughout Celmae.

The Ashen King may appear in any of several forms; as a man wielding a miner's pick and a wearing a crown decked with blue-burning candles, a skeletal Gray Dwarf in blackened armor, or a Kobold with garnets for eyes. But more often he does not show his body, manifesting instead as words written in ashes or a hollow voice whispering from the dark. Kobolds refer to him as the Master with Red Eyes. Brynnish folk call him the Hell-Candle.

Most myths about him agree he was once a mortal and that his actions helped cause the Cataclysm. The race of the King changes to match the people telling the tale, so that among Kobolds he was one of that kind, among Deep Dwarves he is a Deep Dwarf, and so on. The duergar say that the old world was unstable and that the powers the gods had sealed could not be contained; the Ashen King actually saved the world from a worse destruction by breaking it.

Kobolds credit him hurling their greatest enemies up into the airy hells, and adherers serve him.

The most common myth about this god, among Men, tells of a petty king of ancient times, ruler of a small realm whose only source of wealth lay in its mines. This king pushed his workers deeper and deeper in search of wealth, even joining them, setting his scepter aside for a miner's pick. At last, ignoring warnings from the priests and augurs, he breached the barriers placed by the Old Gods and thus unleashed the Cataclysm. The king perished in darkness, pick in hand and still digging even as his last followers died or fled screaming towards the upper works. But the evil powers he released did not fail to reward him. He rose again, a king among the ashes Miners in Bryndell say that when the lamp-fire turns blue and the air below ground turns foul and choking, then The Ashen King has come to inspect the works. Prudent men know to offer a hasty sacrifice, such as a few copper coins dropped down a darkened shaft or a rat crushed with a stone. Failure to placate the god can bring disaster; floods, cave-ins, gas eruptions. Some workers take that worship much further, meeting in secret, dark places where they offer greater sacrifices for greater gains: the blood of men for the treasures hidden underground.

The Ashen King calls on servants from the Elemental realms of Earth and Fire; genies, mephitis, and true elementals. He also uses mummies, spectres, and wights as minions. In his home plane (which may be reached by subterranean portals) zombies and skeletons toil in everexpanding mines. The Ashen King does not trust fiends.

CLERICS

Clerics of The Ashen King among the surface Dwarves work from the shadows to subvert the Dwarf people through a campaign of bribery, blackmail, theft, and assassination.

Among the Duergar, from whom the surface Dwarf cult originated, the clerics operate in the open, commanding great respect.

Adherer elders may become deathless curates* or mummies after dying and desiccating. Adherer and mummy clerics sacrifice captives by hurling them into gray ooze pits.

Brynnish clerics of the Hell Candle often work with thieves' guilds and corrupt officials for mutual profit. Meet in cellars, sewers, and mines.

Kobolds who serve The Master with Garnet Eyes can create toxic false silver, which they use in traps for miners and adventurers. Looks like bluish silver, but acts as a slow contact poison.

* New Material

SERVANTS OF THE ASHEN KING

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KARN IRONMONGER CR 11 XP 12, 800

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Male deep dwarf warpriest 12 LE Medium humanoid (dwarf) Init +4; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +4 DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+11 armor) hp 105 (12d8+48)

Fort +13; Ref +4; Will +12

Defensive Abilities sacred armor (+2, 12 minutes/day), stability; Weaknesses light sensitivity **OFFENSE**

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 deep metal scythe +10/+5 (2d4+4 or 1d10+4/x4) or masterwork heavy pick +11/+6 (1d10+2/x4)

Ranged heavy crossbow +7 (1d10/19-20) **Special Attacks** channel negative energy (DC 20, 4d6), deep magic, deep warrior, fervor 9/day (4d6), sacred weapon +3 (1d10)

Blessings Death, Fire

Minor—fire strike, from the grave Major—armor of flame, death's touch

Spells Known (CL 12th; concentration +12) 4th—air walk, cure critical wounds, divine power, spell immunity

3rd—bestow curse (DC 17), cure serious wounds, dispel magic, invisibility purge, protection from energy, 2nd—bull's strength, death knell (DC 16), hold person (DC 16), owl's wisdom, shatter, spiritual weapon 1st—command (DC 15), cure light wounds, deathwatch, divine favor, obscuring mist, shield of faith 0—bleed (DC 14), detect magic, detect poison, read magic, sparkAPG

TACTICS

During Combat Karn will use his sacred armor ability to give his armor energy resistance, with the type based on the magical attacks being used most effectively by his opponents. He will enhance his scythe with the keen property, and either axiomatic or unholy, depending on the type of creatures he is facing, using his Knowledge (religion) to identify any holy symbols openly displayed by opponents, if necessary.

Morale Karn fights to the death, confident in the knowledge that he will be raised as an undead servant dedicated to his god.

STATISTICS

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Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 16, **Int** 8, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 8 **Base Atk** +7; CMB +9; CMD 19 (23 vs. bull rush and trip)

Feats Cleave, Command Undead, Furious Focus, Great

Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Selective Channeling, Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (heavy pick)

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Skills Intimidate +8 (+10 in armor), Knowledge (engineering) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Spellcraft +8 Languages Common, Dwarven, Undercommon SQ aura

Combat Gear aegis of recovery, gloom helm*, potions of remove fear, potion of shield of faith (+2), scrolls of death ward and tongues ; Other Gear +1 deep metal scythe, masterwork heavy pick, masterwork heavy crossbow and 20 bolts, +2 ornate full plate, buffering cap, cloak of resistance +1, deathwatch eyes, gold holy symbol, 2 garnets (50 gp each)

*see the New Material section for more information on this item.

Karn Ironmonger commands a fortress town on the outskirts of duergar lands. It is the launch point of mining expeditions into the deeps, and the focus of both great wealth and great danger. His troops protect the walls from the monstrosities that lurk in the dark, guard the wealth the miners bring up out of the tunnels and into the forges, and see that the wondrous treasures wrought from it remain safely displayed as a sign of the Ashen King's favor.

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DEIRDRE TALORN CR 11 XP12,800

Female surface dwarf charlatan (rogue) 12 LN Medium humanoid (dwarf) Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +15 DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 81 (12d8+24)

Fort +5; **Ref** +10; **Will** +4; 2 vs. poison, spells, and spelllike abilities

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge **OFFENSE**

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 shortsword+11/+6 (2d4+2/x4) or mwk dagger +11/+6 (1d4+1/19-20)

Ranged +1 shortbow +12/+7 (1d6+1/x3) or mwk dagger +12/+7 (1d4+1/19-20)

Special Attacks +1 on attack rolls against flying creatures, sneak attack +6d6

Spell-like Abilities (CL 12th, concentration +14) 2/day—charm person (DC 13)

3/day—detect magic

TACTICS

Dierdre is not interested in being a warrior. She will dispose of any that discover her operation as quickly and efficiently as possible. If outnumbered she and her familiar, Grenk, will do what they can to escape, using items and abilities to slow or confuse pursuers. Dierdre will use her smokesticks to gain concealment so she can slip away through a doorway or down an alley. Grenk will use his heat metal ability on a heavily armored opponent to force them to strip down rather than pursue. Should foes continue to hound her or attempt to find her, she will use her network to provide them with false clues in order to lead them into danger, like sending them into the local thieves' guild, or hiring thugs or assassins to ambush them when they investigate a rumor of a warehouse with suspicious activity going on within.

Morale Dierdre is a coward at heart, and flees if reduced to 20 hp or less

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14 **Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. bull rush and trip)

Feats Deceitful, Evolved Familiar (scent), Improved Familiar, Improved Feint, Quick Draw, Shadow Strike **Skills** Acrobatics +10, Appraise +10, Bluff +19, Climb +10, Diplomacy +12, Disable Device +10, Disguise +12, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (local) +17, Perception +15 (+17 vs. flying creatures), Sense Motive +15, Stealth +17, Use Magic

Device +10

Languages Common, Dwarven, Ignan, Undercommon **SQ** familiar (fire mephit), natural born liar, rogue talents (black market connections, convincing lie, familiar, improved evasion, minor magic, major magic, rumormonger)

Combat Gear potion of cure serious wounds, wand of dancing lights (50 charges), wand of message (50 charges), smokesticks (4), tanglefoot bag; Other Gear +1 shortbow and 20 arrows, +1 shortsword, masterwork daggers (2), +2 mithral chain shirt, ring of protection +1, disguise kit, masterwork thieves' tools, tindertwigs (10), 100 gp in assorted coinage Familiar Grenk; fire mephit; N Small outsider (fire); Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +6; AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural, +1 size); hp 19 (3d10+3); fast healing 2 (while touching fire); Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +3; DR 5/magic; Immune fire; Weaknesses vulnerability to cold; Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); Melee 2 claws +5 (1d3+1); Special Attacks breath weapon (15-foot cone, 1d8 fire, DC 13 half, every 4 rounds); Spell-like Abilities 1/hour—scorching ray, 1/day—heat metal (DC 14), summon (level 2, 1 fire mephit 25%); Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 14; Base Atk +3; CMB +3; CMD 15; Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative; Skills Bluff +8, Fly +10, Perception +6, Stealth +12; Languages Common, Ignan

Deirdre Talorn is a clandestine agent of the Ashen King in the city of Argaz in the Copper Crown Mountains. She works as a speculator and appraiser for a local mining company as her cover. However, she is deeply invested in the spread of the Ashen King's power among the surface dwarves. Deirdre spends much of her time feeling out the folk of the city, sowing the seeds of dissent where she can, and offering the solace of the Ashen King's worship as a balm to heal what ails the citizenry. Her work is slow and subtle, built on a network of informants and operatives-themselves converts to the cause-that slowly spread the faith using any means at their disposal. Deirdre exerts control through blackmail and coercion on some; others she sways by getting them in her debt and using that leverage to make changes to local civics that will work in her favor. She is patient and careful, always looking at the long game and trying to keep several moves ahead of any enemies.

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DEATHLESS CURATE

This emaciated corpse appears wrapped in dusty strips of cloth, with a crudely-cast hand of lead grasping its chest, fingers slipped between the strips to clutch the thing's rib cage.

DEATHLESS CURATE CR 9 XP 4800

Dread mummy advanced adherer cleric 3 **LE** Medium undead (augmented monstrous humanoid) **Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3 Aura greater despair (100 ft., paralyzed 1d4 rounds plus staggered 1 round, Will save DC 15 negates) **DEFENSE**

AC 33, touch 17, flat-footed 26 (+7 Dex, +16 natural) hp 70 (7d8+35)

Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +9

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, undead traits; DR 5/— ; Immune cold; **SR** 17

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +17 (2d6+11 plus mummy rot and sap moisture)

Special Abilities breath of death, channel negative energy 5/day (DC 15, 2d6), more for me (8/day) Spell-like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11) At will—command undead, elemental speech, expeditious excavation, feast of ashes, heat metal 3/day—ash storm, control undead, dust form, fire snake 1/day—earthquake, sirocco, summon monster VI (earth or fire elementals only) Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +8) 8/day—fire bolt (+12 ranged touch, 30 ft., 1d6+1 fire)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +8) 2nd—darkness, produce flameD, resist energy

1st—bane (DC 15), command (DC 15), disguise selfD, divine favor

0—bleed, guidance, read magic, sparkAPG D Domain spell; Domains Ash, Greed STATISTICS

Str 32, Dex 24, Con —, Int 10, Wis 21, Cha 19 Base Atk +6; CMB +17; CMD 33

Feats Channel Smite, Combat Reflexes, Stand Still, Toughness **Skills** Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Perception +8, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +3, Stealth +10

Languages Aklo, Common SQ aura

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ECOLOGY Environment any underground Organazationsolitary, gang (2-5), or nest (3 plus 2d4 adherers) Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

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Breath of Death (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, a deathless curate can breathe a 30-foot cone of coal gas, ash, and dust. Each living creature in the area must succeed a DC 17 Fortitude save or gain 1d4 negative levels. A creature killed by a deathless curate's breath of death ability rises as a wight (if over 4 HD) or a zombie (if 4 HD or less) in 1d4 rounds. A zombie created in this manner is under the command of its creator (as command undead spell) and remains so until either it or the creator is destroyed.

More for Me (Su) When another character within 30 feet casts a spell with a range greater than touch, you can attempt a caster level check as an immediate action (DC = 15 + the spell's level). If you succeed at the check, you receive the spell's benefit instead of one of the spell's intended targets (chosen by you). If you are already a target of the spell, you are affected as though you were targeted by the same spell twice (which may or may not benefit you; remember that bonuses from the same source do not stack). This ability does not grant you knowledge of the spell being cast. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

Sap Moisture (Su) A living creature struck by a deathless curate's slam attack takes an additional 4d6 damage (Fort save DC 17 for half) as its flesh withers and cracks, the moisture drawn into the deathless curate's desiccated flesh, rejuvenating its adherer abilities. For 1 minute after a successful use of this ability, the deathless curate regains a living adherer's adhesive ability, granting it a climb speed of 10 feet, a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and the grab ability. A weapon that strikes a rejuvenated deathless curate becomes stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds at a DC 17 Reflex save. An adjacent creature can attempt to pry off a stuck weapon with a DC 19 Strength check, but doing so provokes an attack of opportunity from the deathless curate. A deathless curate does not gain the grappled condition when it grapples a foe, nor does it provoke attacks of opportunity when it attempts to do so. Universal solvent, alchemical solvent, or a similar fluid removes an adherer's adhesive quality for one hour if it fails a DC 15 Reflex save (even if it uses its sap moisture ability again during that time,) or for 1d4 rounds if it makes the save. An adherer can release anything stuck to it as a free action. Each additional use of this ability extends the duration of rejuvenation by 1 minute. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

These undead creatures were once mortal adherers, powerful clerics. Deathless Curates lurk in the same tunnels and deep caves inhabited by their living kin. They serve the leaden Hand, the adherers' aspect of the same god that the Dark Dwarves call the Ashen King.

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One proof of the metaphysical unity of the Leaden Hand, Ashen King, Master with Garnet Eyes, and so on lies in the fact that priests of all these gods – and only such priests—may summon monsters from the realm of the patron god and receive deathless curates. The mummy-like monsters aid the cleric who summoned them as would other such conjured minions, but when the duration of the service ends, they may remain and punish the priest if he has failed or betrayed the god in some way.

Adventure Hooks

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The following scenarios can be used to provide a context in which PCs can come into conflict with the followers of the Ashen King. Adjust these as necessary to fit your campaign requirements or personal preferences.

• The local church of Adan in Argaz is fractured by internal strife. The clergy have been rocked by scandal as several key figures are linked to organized criminal activity, embezzlement of church funds, and accused of heresy. Perhaps the PCs are brought in as impartial investigators, or an NPC ally of the party has been accused and asks them to help clear her name. The thread of the investigation leads to a series of forgeries, false orders, and miscommunication. Discovery of an organized effort to throw down the worship of Adan could lead to an eventual showdown with Deirdre Talorn—and perhaps one or two deathless curates that have been sent to ensure that she succeeds in her task.

• PCs exploring underground, or perhaps scouting for a gnome consortium wishing to expand their mining operations, run afoul of both aberrations and a force of duergar, putting them in three-way competition for whatever gems or precious metals are in the area. The aberrations will simply need to be dealt with, or the PCs can hang back while the deep dwarves take care of them. However the dwarves claim the area in the name of their god as their divine right. Should the party force the issue, they will send for reinforcements from their home and the matter will come to the attention of their leader, Karn Ironmonger, who will act swiftly to defend his people and their resources. How the party chooses to respond is up to the players, but whether they choose force, negotiation, or some other method of dealing with the situation, they will find their opposition formidable.

· Monsters have been coming from the deeps to attack the PCs hometown, or perhaps just a settlement the PCs happen to be passing through. The creatures attack in the night, killing some, abducting others. Should the PCs take it upon themselves to investigate, they quickly find that the town is being attacked by adherers, coming to the surface from abandoned sewer tunnels beneath the streets, that connect to subterranean depths. Tracking the creatures back to their lair brings the PCs to a temple amid an active volcanic area. The threat of the adherers is compounded by the natural hazards, heat, and possibly traps that use the magma and poisonous gasses in the area. The PCs will eventually meet the leader of the adherers, a deathless curate. Upon its defeat, the PCs may find information that hints the attacks may not have been random, and may have been orchestrated by other followers of the Ashen King, allowing for either Deirdre Talorn or Karn Ironmonger to be brought in as a further antagonist.

NEW SPELLS

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ASHEN KING'S GLOOM

School: conjuration (creation) [fear, mind-affecting]; Level: cleric 4 Casting Time: 1 standard action Components: V, S Range: medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level) Effect: cloud spreads in a 20-ft. radius, 20 ft. high Duration: 1 minute/level Saving Throw: Will negates; Spell Resistance: no

A cloud of gray, hot smoke roils out from the point you designate in a 20 foot area. The smoke obscures vision as a fog cloud does. All enemies within the cloud feel the stern gaze of the Ashen King upon them, and must succeed at a Will save or be shaken for as long as they remain within the cloud, and for 1d4 rounds after leaving its area. Anyone within the cloud's area that attempts to remove the cloud, either through dispel magic or creating winds to disperse the smoke draws the Ashen King's ire. The offending creature must succeed at a second Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds, interrupting their action and fleeing the cloud in a random direction. This effect of the cloud does not affect anyone attempting to remove the cloud from outside its area.

As with fog cloud, wind—whether natural or otherwise—will disperse the smoke, and the spell cannot be cast underwater.

LAVA-BALL

School: Transmutation (Fire); Level: Clr 5, Sor/Wiz 4 Casting Time 1 standard action Components: V,S,M (stand of fire giant hair) Range: Touch Target: One stone/level (maximum 15) Duration: 10 minutes/level or until discharged Saving Throw: None; Spell Resistance: No

With this spell you magically enhance stones such that when you throw them, they transform into giant balls of lava that do not harm you. You treat these as light thrown weapons with which you are proficient. These balls of lava deal 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d6 points of fire damage + your caster ability in fire damage.

The boulders have a range increment of 60 feet and can be thrown up to 5 range increments. These boulders strike as bludgeoning damage, rather than spells, and are considered magic weapons for the purposes of damage reduction. These stones can be enhanced with spells as though they were projectiles. Once a stone strikes (or misses) its target, the magic within is discharged, and the stone reverts back to normal.

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SPHERE OF DISINTEGRATION School: Transmutation; Level: Sor/Wiz 7 Casting time 1 standard action Components: V,S Range: 40 ft. + 10 ft. per caster level Area: 2-foot-diameter sphere Duration: 1 minute Saving Throw: Fortitude partial; Spell Resistance: Yes

You create what appears to be a sphere of annihilation except any matter that comes in contact with the sphere suffers 100 hp of damage; only if this damage is enough to kill/destroy the creature/object is it instantly sucked into the void and utterly destroyed. A successful Fortitude save results in 15 points of damage. A successful save that fills/destroys the creature or object still results in its utter destruction. In all other ways it functions like a sphere of annihilation (you must still make control checks to move it, for example). This sphere affects even objects constructed entirely of force, such as a foreful hand or wall of force (creating a 2 foot diameter hole), but not magical effects such as a globe of invulnerability or an antimagic field.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

GLOOM HELM Aura strength type; CL 7th Slot head; Price 28,000 gp; Weight 3 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This black iron helm is fashioned with a number of curved spikes rising up around the brow, resembling a crown. Once per day, the wearer of the gloom helm can breathe out a cloud of smoke that acts as Ashen King's gloom, with the effect centered on the helm's wearer. Any Intimidate checks made by the wearer of the gloom helm against those within the area of an Ashen King's gloom effect (whether cast as a spell or produced by the helm) gain a +4 profane bonus. The wearer of the gloom helm can see through this effect, and can see through any other source of smoke or flames without penalty, ignoring any cover or concealment bonuses from fire and smoke.

As a standard action, the wearer of the gloom helm can end the Ashen King's gloom effect, causing the smoke to roil around those within the cloud, the ashy smoke seeming to seep into their weapons and armor. In doing so, the helm's wearer can cause up to seven chosen targets within the effect of the cloud to be subject to a heat metal effect (Will DC 14).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, Ashen King's gloom, crafter must have access to the Fire domain; Cost 14,000 gp

SPECIALIZED SUMMON MONSTER LIST

I. MORLOCK II. 2 NORKERS III. CHOKER IV. ADHERER V. GRICK VI. DEATHLESS CURATE^{*} VII. 2 CINDER GHOULS VIII. GREATER MUMMY IX. NEOTHELID

* New Material

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OBEDIENCES

An obedience is typically an hour-long ritual that must be performed daily; unless otherwise stated, it does not harm the creature performing it. Spellcasting mystery cultists can integrate their obedience completely with their normal hourlong rituals and methods of preparing or regaining spells—others are free to perform their obedience at any point during the day. Most choose dawn as the time of obedience.

Obedience can bring with it great boons, particularly to the most powerful of an empyreal lord's followers. The Celestial Obedience feat allows a worshiper of an empyreal lord to gain access to additional resistances and powers. Similarly, Deific Obedience does the same for worshipers of gods and Demonic Obedience for worshipers of demon lords. The power granted by an obedience depends on which empyreal lord, deity, or demon lord the performer worships. A character can only worship one empyreal lord or deity, and cannot worship any other creature or group when doing so.

The Ashen King

God of Fire, evil, and undeath Alignment Lawful Evil Domains Death, Earth, Evil, Fire Favored Weapon Scythe, pick Centers of Worship Brynndell, Doerland, Karbas, Zamcelty, unknown cities in the World Below.

Nationality dwarf

Obedience After reciting a prayer to The Ashen King, immolate a burrowing creature. Once cremated, use the creature's ashen remains to draw the symbol of the Master of Garnet Eyes on a subterranean cavern wall. All of your melee attacks burn with the angry heat of your god, and deal 2 additional points of fire damage with each successful hit. Mindless undead recognize your connection to the Ashen King, and treat you as a member of their ranks, ignoring your presence.

EVANGELIST BOONS

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1: Ember Eater (Sp) endure elements 3/day, resist energy 2/day, protection from energy 1/day.

2:Cremator (Su) You can ensure that a slain creature never returns to life. As a standard action you can touch a corpse and cause it to dissolve into black ash. A corpse dissolved this way cannot be raised as an undead creature by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish*. The ash is mixed with a sickly, adhesive material that further destroys the remaining dust, preventing the dead from being returned to true life. The adhesive cannot be removed without applying *universal solvent* within 2 rounds of a corpse being reduced to ash with this method. If the collected ash is cleaned with solvent within that time, it is possible to return the corpse to true life, but only if all of the ash is present in one pile.

3: Friend of Fire and Coal (Sp) Once per day as a standard action you can cast *summon monster VII* to summon a greater earth or fire elemental. You gain telepathic communication with the elemental to a range of 100 feet, and the elemental obeys your commands perfectly.

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EXALTED BOONS

महत क्रम्प्रेस दालका प्रहत प्रहतिह दालका प

1: Fire and Ash (Sp) burning hands 3/day, darkness 2/day, or deeper darkness 1/day.

2: Eyes of garnet (Su) your eyes take on the appearance of ruby gems, granting you the ability to see in darkness like devils. You gain darkvision to a range of 60 feet. If you choose either *darkness* or *deeper darkness* as the spell-like ability granted by your first boon, you can also see perfectly through *darkness* and *deeper darkness*. If you already have darkvision to a range of 60 feet or more, instead increase the range of your darkvision by 10 feet. Your eyes make you extremely distinctive, causing you to take a -4 on disguise checks.

3: Ally of Ash (Sp) The Ashen Kings servants have taken notice of your deeds and answer your call. Once per day as a standard action, you can summon a pair of greater mummies to serve you. You gain telepathy with these greater mummies to a range of 100 feet. The greater mummies follow your commands perfectly for 1 minute for every hit die you possess before vanishing back to their lairs. They don't obey commands that would make them perform overly good acts, and such instructions could cause them to attack you if they are particularly egregious.

SENTINEL BOONS

1: Retributive Fire (Sp) magic missile 3/day, scorching ray 2/day, or fireball 1/day.

2: Weapons of the King (Ex) You have trained extensively with the Ashen King's favored weapons, the scythe, pick, and related arms, and you wield them with the skill of his most favored undead champions. If you selected the heavy blades group for your weapon training class feature, increase your attack and damage bonuses with heavy blades by 1. If you don't have the weapon training class feature, you instead gain a +1 on attack and damage rolls with the scythe and pick only. 3: Destructive Strike (Sp) Once per day, you can channel the destructive fires of the Ashen King through your weapon, recreating the effects of disintegrate. You must declare your use of this ability before you roll your attack. On a hit, the target is affected as if targeted by disintegrate cast by a wizard of a level equivalent to your Hit Dice (maximum CL 20th). If your attack misses, the disintegrate effect is wasted.

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