MM 4 A DUNGEON WORLD MONSTER MANUAL

GREAT MONSTERS

JOHNSTONE METZGER & NATHAN JONES







GREAT MONSTERS OF CRIME

Writing and publishing by Johnstone Metzger. Illustrations by Nathan Jones. Vancouver, Canada. August, 2017.

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CRIME AFTER DEATH

CHALICE OF SHADOWS

The Chalice of Shadows is a legendary magical item. Said to have taught King Zuleiman how to summon demons, it turned the tide for the Monster King Mortegaunt when he fought the Nightless Queen's glittering warriors in the Fields of Brass. A hundred years later, after the dukes Ferduzan and Chrysostomos conquered the lands around Skull Mountain, the chalice again reappeared, this time in the hands of their most trusted advisor, the wizard Archameos. But their gruesome fates are told in many a song and folk saying, and need not be repeated here.

Kardwane boasted of employing it against her rivals, though none ever saw her do so, and all three charlatans who poisoned King Eldregund III claimed they knew where it could be found. But their claims were never substantiated, and the present owner and location of the chalice is a matter of great secrecy. The bounty hunter, **Vartosh Malleon**, won't tell you who owns it, even though he knows. Or rather, he knows who *should* have possession of it, because they have employed him to get it back.

For the Chalice of Shadows **has been stolen**, whisked away into the night by perfidious burglars. Vartosh has tracked it back to the caves below Skull Mountain—the last place history reliably records it being located. Is this mere coincidence? Vartosh thinks not. There is some connection linking it to this place, something more than the grave of the Monster King.

But Vartosh is uncertain as to how he should proceed. The identity of the thief has turned out to be a far greater roadblock than he has anticipated—for it is none other than **Aleändro Carvayano**, a powerful necromancer and the leader of an immense, and immensely successful, criminal death cult.

who could have miled mill. Ron fuild, permaps.				
I	The Cult of the Horned God.	6	Lothar Nebramios.	
2	Duchess Kinara Ferduzan.	7	Maggie Marlinspike.	
3	The Fomorian Underworld.	8	The Swamp Witch.	
4	Harlan Blackhand.	9	The Verdigris Oracle.	
5	The Lich Sorceress.	10	Zorbal the Damned.	
			A REAL PROPERTY OF A REAP	

Who could have hired him? Roll 1d10, perhaps.

CHALICE OF SHADOWS

VARTOSH MALLEON

16 HP 3 Armour

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Cautious, Devious, Intelligent, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Alchemically enhanced.

Along the frontier edges of civilization, where rich men carve out new empires from the amalgamated soil of chance, rumour, and blatant exploitation, the usual protections of lawful society do not apply. The usual strategies become ineffective, and the usual minions fall short. This is where Vartosh Malleon steps in, to track down problems and return them, in exchange for a hefty sum. When his way is the only way, the cost is worth it.

Instinct: To hunt and retrieve.

Attacks:

- Magic rifle (1d6 damage, 1 piercing; near, far).
- Sword (1d8+2 damage, forceful, messy; close).

Moves:

- Creep through the wilderness in camouflage.
- Cut off a foe's avenue of escape.
- Push a foe over and grab something from their person.
- Retain a trustworthy lawyer.
- Set the environment on fire.

Tactics:

If they betray a contract: Call in favours to get revenge.

If they fight: Use every resource against them.

If they give up: No one has to die.

Weaknesses:

Vartosh is addicted to performance-enhancing vapours. He carries canisters and uses a mask to administer it. This is all highly technical gear, and he pays an alchemical company to stay supplied. It has kept him alive and successful at bounty hunting, however, so he considers it a worthwhile investment. If an enemy were to

target this vapour and deprive him of it, he would becomes far less effective.

"Look, I don't care what you're doing here. I have a job to do, which means you need to get the hell out of my way."



CRIME AFTER DEATH

ALEÄNDRO CARVAYANO

Divine, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Blessed by the death gods, Death cult leader, Necromancer.

18 HP 4 Armour

There have always been necromancers, in every land, but rarely one so devious or charismatic as Aleändro Carvayano. There have always been death cults, all across the continent—scattered cells of depraved dabblers in the arts who long for self-destruction or immortality—but now? Now there is only one.

Instinct: To grow in power.

Attacks:

- Ghostly choking hand (1d10+2 damage, ignores armour; reach). Moves:
- Call out to the gods of death.
- Command the death cult's loyalty.
- Create a zone of silence.
- Raise a corpse to unlife and command it to action.
- Summon a ghost and force it to obey.

Tactics:

- *If they are a credible threat:* Undermine them from the shadows before sending minions to slay them.
- If they could prove useful to the cult: Charm them, negotiate, offer them rewards beyond measure.
- If they prove to be an immediate threat: Sacrifice minions and escape from danger at any cost.

Weaknesses:

Aleandro is a very capable cult leader and s brilliant necromancer, but he has underestimated society's loathing and disdain for his kind. If the extent of his crimes should become public, nobles from shore to shore will be clamouring to lead their troops again him.

"Life has no intrinsic meaning, for any of us. It is only in death that the secrets of the universe are revealed."



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IN THE LAIR OF THE DEAD

Carvayano is no wandering murderhobo. In order to retrieve the Chalice of Shadows, prospective burglars must enter his secret lair and contend with its many secrets and traps. And this is after they bypass the death cultists that guard its location.

THE FIVE DEAD KINGS

Carvayano has had the bodies of five kings dug up and relocated to a secret network of caves, so they will serve him. All were defeated by Mortegaunt, the Monster King, in ages past, and sentenced to eternal life-in-death, sealed inside their tombs. They are:

The Flowered King ruled from a glass and iron castle full of magnificent gardens. His kingdom was known for never using stone, having made an oath to leave all stone within the ground. He was warned by the elves to prepare for war, but ignored them, thinking his sorcerers were more than a match for the Monster King. He was wrong.

The Jewelled King, whose greed knew no bounds and was surpassed by none, rose against the Monster King as soon as he could, in a bid for power and easy riches. Rumour has it that the Monster King stuffed his corpse full of his own gemstones before raising him from the dead and sealing him inside a tomb.

The Iron King, who despised all wealth and luxury, stood fast against the Monster King longer than anyone. When he was finally defeated, the Monster King burned the flesh all over his body with red-hot coins for 20 days and 20 nights before ending his life.

The Vampire King was first an ally of the Monster King, but then betrayed him. Some say this betrayal hurt more than anything else in the world, and for that reason, the Vampire King—whether he was truly undead before or not—lies waiting within his sarcophagus for unwise adventurers to set him free.

The Wolf King, terror of the north and dispenser of justice, was one of the loudest and staunchest enemies of the Monster King, and a true friend of lawful civilizations everywhere. But even justice cannot defeat war, and now this king, too, suffers from the curse of life-in-death.

THE GHOST POOL

Carvayano keeps all five next to a pool, where ghosts are forced to appear and obey. He consults them about the secrets of death and the past, and they answer him, whether they like it or not.

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DARK POWERS

Though it appears to be nothing more than an unassuming, pewter jug with a snake-shaped lid, the powers of the chalice are quite dangerous and sinister. They are also rather simple, for all that it chalice drives wizards to kill each other. It produces shadowy serpents of burning darkness to plague and bedevil the foes of whosoever possesses the chalice.

When you attempt to command the Chalice of Shadows, roll+INT. On a 10+, you may cause it to summon a swarm of shadow serpents and send them against your foes. On a 7-9, treat your result as a 10+, above, if you are chaotic. Otherwise, you have a choice: the chalice drains your of life force to fuel the shadow serpents, inflicting two debilities of the GM's choice, or the swarm is under no one's control. On a 6 or less, the chalice rejects you. Once you command the chalice a number of times equal to 4 minus your CHA, without being rejected, you may automatically command it once each day and night from then on.



SWARM OF SHADOW SERPENTS

19 HP o Armour

Amorphous, Planar, Solitary, Stealthy.

Special Qualities: Flying, Made of burning darkness.

The Chalice of Shadows has no personality of its own, no intelligence guiding it towards any specific purpose. It was created to introduce an otherworldly darkness into the material plane, but so far has been doing a rather poor job. Oddly, the serpents it produces are more inimical to the forces of Chaos than any other force, and seem to respect the law more than their nature would suggest.

Instinct: To plague and bedevil.

Attacks:

- Burning touch (1d6 damage, 1 piercing; close).
- Constriction (1d10+2 damage, forceful, ignores armour; close).

Moves:

- Dissolve into noxious vapours.
- Fly through the air without a sound.
- Light things on fire.
- Slip through tight spaces.
- Track by arcane means.

Tactics:

If they are servants of chaos: Attack them first.

If they are servants of law: Approach tentatively, and only if absolutely necessary.

Weaknesses:

Even though these snakes are not made out of any Earthly darkness, they can only last for a few minutes in direct sunlight, at the longest. Beneath a hot, summer sun, they dissipate in mere heartbeats.

THE REDDISH YOLK

Inside each snake is a **reddish-pink fluid**, like the yolk of an egg. Anyone who consumes this fluid experiences **vivid hallucinations** exalting any conventions of behaviour their society takes for granted as natural laws or sees as essential to law and order.

SNAKES ON THEIR OWN

Should any individual serpents be separated from the swarm, drop their damage by a die size, and assume they have no more than 3 HP each. Serpents can sprout new serpents, however, and this is how they maintain a swarm.





THE DEATH CULT

As far as nameless, death-worshipping cults go, the one that battles for control of Skull Mountain is certainly not the most nihilistic organization to ever blemish the face of the Earth, but that is the secret to their success. They have a clear agenda, and while it is obsessively violent and ultimately calls for the extinction of all sentient life, it excludes self-destruction. This cult may serve the gods of death, but they intend to be the last among the living, and the last to cross that threshold once and for all.

ORIGINS

The death cult has no name and no solid hierarchy, because it simply cannot. It was formed through the union of many smaller cults, brought together from every corner of the globe by magical communications and a mutual deathwish. Some have their own names, and all have their own traditions. They have been coalescing together for decades, but it is only recently, thanks to **Aleändro Carvayano**, that they have increased their powers exponentially.

He contacted many others, accelerating the union of death cults—Dead Eye, captain of the pirate fleet The Reaper's Knives; Degazo, king of the pale, eyeless hordes of the undercaves; Kesil, the vampire queen; the recluse, Lothar Nebramios; Mbazi, the Moonless Night, leader of the Bleeding Men; Ragadrinn, primarch of the Church of the Last Day; and many more. It is Carvayano's great plan that keeps them from each others' throats, and the shared philosophy that murder brings with it supernatural power.

While they still operate in secret, just as they each once did alone, they are no longer afraid of discovery. Instead they use the shadows to help them strike, ever farther outwards. They train new cells of cultists all the time, and send them out into the world to appease the Black Gates. They build an army of undead that obeys their wills. And they fight with monsters for control of arcane secrets that will help them kill even greater numbers of people. They are united in their quest: to feed the death gods ever more souls.

PHILOSOPHY

When you kill someone who has killed fewer people than you, their ghost is your slave in the afterlife. The more slaves someone has, the more powerful they are. If you slay someone again, in the afterlife, they become your slave, no matter how many kills there are between you. Once every life—every single ghost—is controlled by the cult, their dominance will be supreme.

This is the **fundamental belief** of the death cult, the axiom their whole philosophy revolves around. It is their mission to murder. They kill those who do not kill, because it brings them power. They kill those who attack the death cult, so their mission may continue unhindered. Those who kill but do not attack the death cult are free to go about their business, until such time as they become a threat to the death cult—then they must be killed. When there is no one left to kill, the cult will have finished its work. The day of judgment will pass, and the battles of the afterlife will begin. Those who have killed the most will triumph, and those who triumph will be the death cultists.

There is, of course, some debate about the proper tactics the cult should employ. Ghosts can be bound, but do they stay with the necromancer after death? Or do they revert to the one they were killed by? Can ghosts escape their killer's control before the day of judgment? Can they be stolen by the death cult's necromancers? If you kill someone who has more ghost-slaves than you, are they really free, or do they instead become your slave? If they are enslaved, do they retain control of their own ghost-slaves? Can they use these ghost-slaves to rebel against their master? Or are their slaves now free, and easy prey for necromancers to take control of? Is this where all these free-roaming ghosts come from?

All these questions, and more, the death cult is keen to answer. They seek power over the dead by any means necessary, but their favourite tactic is, and always has been, murder. They kill others directly, with their own weapons. They raise the dead and send their hordes of zombies to kill the living. They bind ghosts to their will and forge them into weapons to kill yet more hapless victims. As long as there are people left alive, somewhere, the death cult's cause remains: to murder.

THE ANCIENTS

The sect of death worshippers—more like a gang, really—known as "the Ancients" used to be grave-robbing ruffians until they found the score of a lifetime. Under a hill in the Plains of Akkarth, they found the tombs of the pre-civilized Ardoussarlian kings, all buried in their **magical bronze armour**. The Ancients not only took these suits of armour, to wear themselves, they also infused them with the ghosts still tethered to these antediluvian bodies. Now they take their name from this armour, and those they took it from. Now they use this power to further the agendas of the gods of death.

The Ancients are perhaps the least unified and coherent group within Carvayano's death cult. They range from young firebrands drunk on the arcane power they have discovered to narrowminded religious lawyers strictly parsing thanotic philosophies to determine the correct behaviours that will appease the death gods. Really the only thing that binds them together is the suits of armour they found together.

GHOST CHAINS

Most of the armour they stole was magical to begin with, but the Ancients were also able to bind ghosts to the metal pieces as well. Magical glyphs and runes hold ectoplasmic chains that strangle spirits, dragged behind each cultist like a shroud. These ghosts can be used as shields to ward of harmful magical effects, being sacrificed to soak up the enchanted energy. It is of no consequence to the Ancients that ghosts are destroyed in this fashion, for there are always more ghosts to be chained.

Because the Ancients wear whatever pieces of armour they find the most useful, or the most useful to enchant, they rarely present a coherent look. Roll 1d20 several times for prominent features:

I	Animal helmet.	п	Horse-hair mohawk.
2	Asymmetrical plates.	12	Huge metal shield.
3	Blackened silver.	13	Invisible plates.
4	Bladed greaves.	14	Iron chains.
5	Caked in dried blood.	15	Layered chainmail.
6	Chainmail skirting.	16	Magical glyphs.
7	Decorated breastplate.	17	Numerous lamellar plates.
8	Decorative flowers.	18	Skull mask.
9	Embossed scalemail.	19	Skull-embossed plates.
10	Heavy spiked gauntlets.	20	Spiked shoulder plates.

ARMOURED "ANCIENT" CULTIST

10 HP 4 Armour

Divine, Group, Intelligent, Organized. **Special Qualities:** Death cultist.

Most of the Ancients literally live in their armour, even sleeping in it, no matter how uncomfortable that might be.

Instinct: To be armoured.

Attacks:

- Charge and tackle (1d4+2 damage, forceful; near).
- Various weapons (1d8 damage, 1 piercing; close).

Moves:

- Shake off a magical attack or effect by sacrificing a ghost.
- Take a blow for another death cultist.

Tactics:

If they attack the death cult: Stand in their way.

If they have arcane secrets that are valuable to the death cult: Attack them directly, without regard for anyone's safety.

Weaknesses:

Nearly every one of the Ancients is overconfident. Their armour is but a shell they wear to keep the cruel world away. Their bluster is a mask, overcompensating for either the deep existential dread that lurks inside, or a sense of irreparable inadequacy that fuels their self-destructive behaviour.

REPLACEMENT PARTS

Some of the Ancients also took body parts from the dead kings whose tombs they raided, replacing those they lost to traps and the blades of enemies. This proved so successful it has been continued even after, and now the Ancients regularly replace their own limbs and organs with the undead pieces of powerful foes they have defeated.

While they have recently begun experimenting with wearing the faces of their enemies, since none of the Ancients wants to remove their armour for a lengthy period of time, they have not tried impersonating anyone in society.



THE BLACK SKULLS

The Black Skulls are one of the cult's terror units, but unlike the Bleeding Men, they do not care about actually fighting in a fearsome manner. Instead, they leave evidence of their attacks for living populations to find, to demoralize them and make them easier to kill when their time comes. They prefer to **ambush** their foes at night or in darkness, and cut them down as quickly and efficiently as possible.

They are not picky about their ideologies, though they sometimes engage in debate with other cultists. Most of the Black Skulls worship the gods of death so that they can live forever in undeath, as proof of their superiority. Strength is their ultimate goal, and this shows even in their initiation rites: to join, you must carve out your own eyes and replace them with magical black orbs. Succeed and darkness no longer clouds your vision, but if you fail, blindness and death are your lot.

In spite of this, they have many ties to other groups of death worshippers. They do more vigorous **evangelizing** for the death cult than most do, and try to ensure there are always new recruits in the cult's ranks. Though they care more about efficiency than zealous abandon, they still respect the Bleeding Men, and invite them to take point on many raids. Likewise, they also respect the White Skulls, even though they care more about brutality of action than finesse. They welcome their ivory fellows on more stealthy missions. And though they are in no way a company of wizards, still they have learned the **pyromantic arts** at the feet of the blackbone nuns.

THE ALL-CONSUMING FIRE

In the death cult's lair, there is a **great bonfire** that never goes out. Tended by the Black Skulls, it is a symbol of the death gods—a prayer to their magnificence, even. When the Black Skulls need new face masks, they take the skulls of enemies to this fire, and burn the flesh off, until the bone is stained black and suffused with necromantic magic. They take the rest of an enemy's bones and compress them down, inside the flames, to form the **black eyeballs** they all use to see the world.

BLACK SKULL DEATH CULTIST

10 HP 1 Armour

Divine, Group, Intelligent, Organized, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Darksight eyeballs, Death cultist, Pyromancer.

The primary activity of the Black Skulls is night raids and ambushes, though they sometimes transport valuables for Carvayano. Even when they are commanded to stick to stealth and leave the locals alone, they still make scouting runs to assess the location and number of their potential—and inevitable—victims.

Instinct: To live on the edge of death.

Attacks:

- Cruel weapons (1d8 damage, forceful; close).
- Gout of flame (1d6 damage, ignores armour, messy; reach).

Moves:

- Get to an advantageous tactical position.
- Hide in cramped places, ready for ambush.
- Produce a fire that is hard to extinguish.
- Sneak through the night in silence.

Tactics:

If things go wrong: Risk everything for victory.

- When enemies of the death cult are uncovered: Strike hard and fast, without warning.
- When local populations are vulnerable: Slaughter and burn, every second night, until there are no local populations left.

Weaknesses:

As much as the Black Skulls live for the death gods, they live for the rush of killing, the heat of battle, and the thrill of great risk. When they overextend themselves, they keep going, digging in and taking greater and greater risks. They never start an attack from a risky position, but they can get there real fast if things go wrong.

"Fire doesn't *cleanse*, you fool. It burns. It destroys. It turns things to ashes. It *kills*. And so we use it to kill as many as we can, until there is no life left."



THE BLEEDING MEN

Although they support the goals of the death cult, the Bleeding Men do not believe in its philosophy of the afterlife. Instead, they believe that every drop of blood they shed, and every life they send past the Black Gates, gives power to their death god and brings them closer to union with it. Their own death also counts as a sacrifice to their god, so they have no qualms about dving while on a murder spree.

This simple cosmology sometimes puts them at odds with other cultists who are picky about how murder happens, but more often it allows them to be bipartisan zealots welcome in any warband or raiding party.

BLEEDING MAN

10 HP 1 Armour Divine, Group, Intelligent, Organized. Scouts are also Stealthy. Special Qualities: Death cultist.

The Bleeding Men are much the same as other cultists, only better. Bloodier, tougher, more zealous and spartan. They are allowed to be arrogant, because they have proven their skill at murder.

Instinct: To become one with the death god.

Attacks:

- Blood spit (1d6 damage; hand). If blood spit is not removed, it continues to deal damage.
- Dirty blade (1d8 damage, infection, messy; close).

Moves:

- Bleed uncontrollably without slowing down.
- Pray to the death god for guidance and insight.

Tactics:

- When a target is selected: Let the scouts determine how they are vulnerable.
- When the scouts have come back: Follow the plan, attack as swiftly as possible, and murder everyone.

Weaknesses:

Not only are the Bleeding Men as anti-social as other death cultists (or even more so), they are also foreigners in a land that is strange to them. They have left behind the countrysides so familiar to them in order to pursue the vision of Aleändro Carvayano, which they believe is their best chance to elevate their god. Even those who have picked up some of the local dialects are unable to pass for locals. They are marked as death worshippers wherever they go, and are dependent on either violence or other cultists to procure them supplies.



CULT RECRUITS

New recruits all have their own reasons for joining. Perhaps there is no opportunity where they come from, or they have seen so much death in their lives that they have decided to "switch sides," as it were. Perhaps they lust after magical power, or they joined because their friends did so. Or maybe they just want to kill someone so bad, they will join a cult that will help them do the deed.

Some have a hard time parsing the many strains of philosophy within the death cult, while others do not care. The death cult uses them as **disposable infantry**, however, so each will find their own way toward the gods of death, one way or another.

DEATH CULT RECRUIT

6 HP 1 Armour

Group, Intelligent, Organized.

Some recruits are timid, and need more experienced cultists to urge them on, while others attack with wild, reckless abandon. The cult pairs these types together to keep their behaviours in check.

Instinct: To become full members of the death cult.

Attacks:

• Some kind of weapon (1d6 damage; close).

Moves:

- Charge screaming into the ranks of foes.
- Notice something other death cultists take for granted.
- Pose as an ordinary person.

Tactics:

When the death cult gives orders: Try very hard to obey.

Weaknesses:

Recruits are, by definition, inexperienced. They might still be talked out of pursuing death worship, and even if not, they can be

dispatched much easier than their more martially-inclined superiors.

"Yo, we need to *do* this. These are cult enemies, they need to die for the glory of the death gods!"



CULT ZOMBIES

The death cult gets its zombies from every possible source—killing people, robbing graves, raising their own dead members, or even buying them from other necromancers. Even as efficient methods of raising the dead spread through the death cult, there are still a dozen different methods in use at any one time. The results, however, are generally the same: mindless servants that obey without question.

DEATH CULT ZOMBIE

10 HP o Armour

Construct, Divine, Group. Special Qualities: Undead.

As one might expect, the zombies of the death cult are unintelligent undead that will obey simple commands implanted via magical spells. They cannot think for themselves.

Instinct: To serve the death cult.

Attacks:

• Ragged, strangling hands (1d8 damage, close).

Moves:

- Spill pestilential maggots upon the ground.
- Stand perfectly still, silent and motionless.

Tactics:

If they are not death cultists: Kill them.

Weaknesses:

Being desiccated husks of once-living creatures, death cult zombies are more vulnerable to fire than living creatures are.

SPECIAL ZOMBIES

When zombies are needed for specific purposes, they are given special characteristics. Some are infused with smoldering heat so

they set fire to all that they touch. Others are encrusted with crystalline formations or rocky growths, to give them armour. They can be stuffed with explosives, poison fungus, or plague rats, and sent toward large groups of people. Some are even sewn together to create hideous abominations with too many limbs.



THE DROW

Because of Aleändro's great charisma, a small cadre of dark elves have come to his side from the underground world they normally inhabit. They believe the death cult, in its present incarnation, has the power to achieve its goals, and they want to be a part of it.

They do not resemble other drow, however, and some surface dwellers may think they are some other type of being. The darkness has all but been drained from beneath their skin by their necromantic magic, leaving them a pale violet or lavender in colour. They are unable to pass as surface elves, though humans can be duped to think they are merely sorcerous fey, or tainted by alchemy.

WAR AGAINST THE TREES

Like many among the death cult, the drow have their own ways of worship, brought with them from deep underground. Their death goddess is the Treeslayer, a drow woman with many horns, flaming eyes, four arms, four legs, and two wombs that birth only corpses. She calls upon her followers to root the sun-loving elves out of their forests, to burn their woods down, and salt the land behind them so that nothing grows.

As strongly as she hates her enemies, that much and more she loves her children. Roll 1d12 one or more times to determine what special powers the Treeslayer has granted to each of her drow followers.

They have the ability, at the cost of some vitality, to...

I Bite like a venomous serpent. Cause stone to break and crumble with a touch. 2 Detect what is invisible or magical. 3 Divine an enemy's most likely future fate. 4 Kill photosynthetic plants with a wave of a hand. 5 Lay an illness upon a foe with a touch. 6 Remain alive while infested with spiders. 7 Summon the ghosts of wood elves murdered by the drow. 8 Summon tendrils of jet black lightning as slow as snakes. 9 Tell lies from truth perfectly. 10 Throw blossoms of blue, ghostly flame at foes. II Vomit forth a cloud of choking fungal miasma. 12

DEATH CULT DROW

12 HP o Armour

Devious, Divine, Group, Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Stealthy. **Special Qualities:** Necromancer.

The drow are very different from the other death cultists—more like wizards than clerical devotees. They bring weird sorcerous rituals, strange rites, and divergent philosophies that often seem paradoxical to humans. But there is no denying the devastating effect they have on their enemies.

Instinct: To destroy the surface dwellers.

Attacks:

- Necromantic words (1d6 damage, ignores armour, slow; near).
- Poison fingerspikes (1d8+2 damage, poison; hand).
- Whip-like flail (1d6+2 damage or stun damage; reach).

Moves:

- Cast a spell of darkness or shadows.
- Parley with demons from the nightmare abyss.
- Perform an arduous magical ritual.
- Raise the dead in zombie form to attack foes.

Tactics:

- If they have social ties and obligations: Target their families and associates with magic and zombie attacks.
- *If they insist on battle:* Do not confront them directly, send minions and use ambush tactics.

Weaknesses:

Though the darkness does not show in their complexions, the drow are still uncomfortable with sunlight. When they feel its touch on their skin, it burns their souls as well. They cannot concentrate on their magic fully, they cannot move as gracefully, they cannot speak as persuasively. Obviously, they avoid natural sunlight as much as possible, but the death cult they have joined operates mostly in the

surface world, so there is no avoiding it entirely.

"We have travelled far from our home to join this cult. We will not be deterred from our goal."



THE LAST DAY

The Church of the Last Day is a death cult philosophy from the East, though variations of it exist all over the world, codified in well-travelled manuscripts and occult books collected for the frisson of danger they lend to a noble's collection of curiosities. Its Drastapuri followers are the only ones who maintain a physical temple devoted to the cause, however, and now a portion of them have left to come west and join Carvayano.

Their leader, **Ragadrinn**, was set to inherit the throne (as the saying goes) and become the next patriarch of the Drastapuri Church. He had led gangs of death worshippers in street battles, sacrificed blood relatives to the death gods, and penned an extraordinarily large number of cosmological essays regarding the end of time. He had earned the respect of his people.

But then he felt the Last Day move forward in time. In visions, he saw the span of years left to the world come under threat, and he saw where that threat was born. Aiding this threat, he could see, was his true calling. Though his own church might suffer for his leaving, he knew they would all agree that the end of the world is more important.

Now he is the patriarch of his own Church of the Last Day, albeit one without a temple, or a real home. But even as enemies in a foreign land, his followers are as steadfast as he is. They have endured great hardships before, and will do so again, simply in order to see the gods of death swallow up time itself.

THE BLACK BOWL

Ragadrinn has brought a black spirit bowl to the death cult. When pieces of a corpse, ghost, or spirit are put inside the black bowl along with water, the ghost or spirit is reformed and made whole in the bowl's presence. Additionally, it must obey the bowl's user for three days and nights. Some very powerful spirits may ignore this compulsion, or cut it short, but most human ghosts have no defence.

What the death cult does not realize, however, is that the bound ghost or spirit may lie or deliberately fail to perform a task once per day of service. So far, Ragadrinn and his followers have assumed this disobedience has been the result of incompetence.

RAGADRINN

19 HP o Armour

Divine, Intelligent, Organized, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Necromancer.

Though gregarious and charismatic, Ragadrinn believes in one of the most cosmologically nihilistic religions mankind has ever known. His church worships the last day of time and works to prepare the universe for oblivion, and Ragadrinn is incredibly callous to those who cannot, or will not, help him achieve this goal. **Instinct:** To bring the last day closer.

Attacks:

Hooked halberd (1d10+2 damage, forceful; reach).

Moves:

- Call to the death gods for a destructive blessing.
- Command the churchgoers in battle formation.
- Torture prisoners "for information."
- Wrench an enemy's arm or leg out of its socket.

Tactics:

If they advance slowly: Rush them, break them into smaller groups,

and concentrate on dispatching them one group at a time. If they strike quickly: Organize a line or square and fight defensively. Weaknesses:

The fact that time-eating magic exists outside his Church fascinates Ragadrinn to no end. Temporal wizards and void sorcerers may become the objects of his obsessions, and he will sell out the rest of the death cult in order to learn their secrets.

THE RED BOWL

Carvayano has promised Ragadrinn a special reward for the service of his cult: a red-coloured spirit bowl, nearly identical in shape to

his black bowl. When water is poured from this bowl over a ghost or spirit, it loses a portion of its memories. If all of its memory is erased, after being drenched three or four times, usually, it becomes ghost essence, numinous which can be used to power spells and magical rituals. Carvayano keeps this bowl hidden from most others.



THE REAVER'S KNIVES

The **pirate fleet** known as the Reaver's Knives is not large, but since it consists only of sailors who have pledged themselves to the death gods, it is hellishly formidable. Their **black flag**, emblazoned with crossed daggers beneath a grinning skull, has been known to stop the hearts of even the stanchest of merchant captains.

Led by the legendary corsair **Dead Eye**, they spend most of their time on the open seas, but are more than willing to ferry other death cultists around and bring them supplies from fat merchant galleons they have slaughtered. Sometimes, the Reaver's Knives even accompany the treasures they send to Carvayano and the cult's land-based forces.

DEATH-WORSHIPPING PIRATE

5 HP o Armour

Divine, Horde, Intelligent, Organized. **Special Qualities:** Death cultist.

The Reaver's Knives are among the most feared and despised vagrants of the seas. Every royal navy in the world has orders to attack them on sight, and for good reason, too.

Instinct: To pillage and ruin.

Attacks:

• Clubs and knives (1d6 damage; close).

Moves:

- Load and fire cannons.
- Pray fervently to the gods of death and the sea.
- Scramble up rigging or the sides of ships and buildings.
- Swing on ropes to a better position.

Tactics:

If they come charging in: Lay a trap, and let them come.

If they fight hard enough to win: Just fight harder and dirtier.

If they surrender: Slaughter them and plunder their ship.

If they turn tail and run: Pursue them as long as the wind allows, then call up ghosts to fill the sails.

Weaknesses:

Dead Eye's pirates may be servants of the death gods, but they are still as superstitious as sailors everywhere. Perhaps even more so, now that they have seen the power of the gods. They can be frightened away by religious artifacts, prayers, and even common magical mumbo-jumbo.

DEAD-EYE

16 HP 1 Armour

Divine, Intelligent, Organized, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Death cultist, Living dead, Pirate captain.

Though he once had dreams of revolution—of republican states rising up from the ashes of regicide on all sides of the oceans—he fell from his ship during a great battle in the Harrowing Sea. Somehow, as far as he remembers, he did not drown until he reached the sea floor, where the death gods received him and revealed their wisdom unto him. He has since abandoned the hope of replacing kings and queens with anything better. These days, turning the world into a graveyard is good enough.

Instinct: To pillage and ruin.

Attacks:

• Rusty cutlass (Id10 damage; close).

Moves:

- Call upon the horrors of the deep.
- Command the pirate fleet.
- Return from the dead.
- Summon the ghosts of the drowned.

Tactics:

Dead Eye leads the Reaver's Knives. Their tactics are his tactics.

Weaknesses:

Dead Eye's heart lies at the bottom of the Harrowing Sea. It is hard for land-lubbers to locate, but every spirit of the sea knows where it is. What might it take for one of them to dredge it up, I wonder?

THE SEASKULL AMULET

Dead Eye wears an amulet that protects him from drowning. Underwater, he can move about as if he had no need to breathe.

He still dies, but he has died before and it no longer bothers him.

"I got a vast for you right here matey, at the end of my cutlass. Just do me a favour and die already."



THE WHITE SKULLS

Of all the death cultists, none prize finesse, perfection, and excellence as much as the White Skulls. Just as the white bone is cleansed of any excess meat and gristle, they strive to cut the meat off every aspect of themselves. To remove all that is unnecessary from one's existence, and become as pristine as the well-picked bone, is their ultimate goal. For once enough power has been achieved, and there is nothing to hold one back, it will be nothing to end one's own life and become more powerful than ever before.

Unlike other cultists, the White Skulls display no arrogance about their skills or achievements. Boasting is mere meat to be cast off, for the gods of death know all that is contained in our bones, and nothing else matters.

EATERS OF THE DEAD

The White Skulls have what often seems like a symbiotic relationship with scavenging animals. **Mangy, rabid dogs** and **fat carrion birds** follow them around, docile to their touch but aggressive toward life that does not worship a death deity. The White Skulls may throw scraps of meat to these creatures, the better for them to get to the pristine bones beneath, but do nothing otherwise to promote their survival. They are content to gain an advantage from their presence and care little if they die.

When there are no animals around, or they have run out of better food, the White Skulls engage in cannibalism themselves. Although nothing in their traditions encourages it, the best of the White Skulls have learned to **steal the memories** of those they eat. Some of them even believe that devouring a person's bones and marrow is the truest way to claim their soul for the death gods. But normally, they use this ability to gather information about their enemies.

WHITE SKULL DEATH CULTIST

10 HP 2 Armour

Divine, Group, Intelligent, Organized, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Death cultist.

The White Skulls strive for martial perfection. If you dare to face one on equal terms, you may have to defy the danger of their excellent duelling skills before you can hack and slash them. **Instinct:** To find perfection in the gods of bone and death.

Attacks:

• Razor-sharp sword (1d8 damage, 1 piercing; close, reach). **Moves:**

Moves:

- Consume a corpse's flesh and gain its memories.
- Have a carrion bird steal something shiny and valuable.
- Out-maneuver a foe on the field of battle.
- Send feral dogs against a foe.

Tactics:

- *If they accept a duel:* Fight as well as possible, and fairly—but not by their rules. By the rules of the death gods!
- *If they disrupt the death cult's plans:* Hunt them down and polish their bones.

Weaknesses:

As much as the White Skulls strive to shed whatever they consider the excess attributes of their existences, they do not take precautions before devouring the memories of the people they eat. They would not even know if such flesh was poisoned with false thoughts or infectious dreams. Even without such malicious interference, White Skulls can sometimes find themselves experiencing fugue states and a fractured sense of identity.

"You can fight. You might even win! But you will still die."



MONASTERY OF BONES

For decades there was a **monastery** on Skull Mountain. The presence of the nuns there was thought to be a ward against the possible evil the mountain represented—and the evil the mountain contained. But then the corruption set in, and though it remained hidden for a long, long time, it was finally discovered by a group of travelling mendicants. The sole survivor of their group delivered the news to the church and **Saint Anglard** was dispatched to destroy the nuns and the perverted, heretical goddess they idolated.

He was a man renowned for his ability to root out evil, but after razing the monastery to the ground, Saint Anglard still fled from the ruins in horror. He was reticent to speak of it after, not that he had much chance to do so. His next mission was his last, and some believe his experiences on Skull Mountain contributed to that.

THE DEAD RISE AGAIN

But even though they were slaughtered and their monastery was destroyed, the nuns remained unvanquished. For they had taken up worship of the **Bone Goddess**, and she would not let mere death prevent her followers from attending to her sepulchral bidding. With their ties to the living world severed, the nuns began to consort with nameless death cults. They rebuilt their blasphemous altars deep underground, in monster-haunted caves and the halls of long-buried cities.

For the most part, the nuns now prey upon the vagrants of the area, and the numerous migrant workers travelling through, struggling to make it through the present financial crisis. The bodies of their victims are given to their death cult allies or used in magical rituals that strengthens the Bone Goddess' position amongst the denizens of Skull Mountain. Their depredations have given rise to rumours of fiery ghosts stalking the moors at night.



36 CRIME AFTER DEATH

NUN OF THE BONE GODDESS

Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized. Special Qualities: Undead skeleton.

Once as mortal as you or I, the nuns of the Bone Goddess are all skeletons now. Their goddess has imbued them with more power than undead normally have, and so they are wreathed in blue flames. They are not mindless automatons, but neither are they still possessed of human minds. Though still able to think, all desires but those that serve the goddess have atrophied away. They can only speak through visions of their goddess.

Instinct: To kill for the Bone Goddess.

Attacks:

• Flaming hands (1d8+2 damage, burning, forceful; close).

Moves:

- Call out to other servants of death.
- Move silently over soft surfaces.
- Swarm a foe and attack as a mob.

Tactics:

The nuns are fairly unsophisticated when it comes to violence. While stalking prey in the wilderness at night, they try to keep out of sight as long as possible, and then they charge, intent on making off with bodies as quickly as possible. They savagely—even desperately—defend their own territory from intruders.

Weaknesses:

Because they are skeletons, the nuns are much more vulnerable to acid and blunt weapons (their armour doesn't count) than they are to swords and knives. Because they are abominations of life-indeath, they are also vulnerable to holy items and locations dedicated to life, law, and the natural order.



If you get too close to a nun, the ghostly blue flames burn you for 1d6 damage (ignores armour), even if she does not attack you. On a damage roll of 1, your clothes or possessions ignite. The nuns' flames cannot be extinguished, or affected in any way, by water or other liquids. Any fires they ignite are normal.

10 HP 4 Armour
MONASTERY OF BONES 37

The Abbess

+6 HP, +Terrifying.

The spectre of the Bone Goddess follows the abbess, creating a haunting, phantasmagoric scene wherever she goes.

- Cast the pallor of death upon a foe.
- Show visions of the Bone Goddess' knowledge.
- Speak with the voice of the Bone Goddess.

When the pallor of death has been cast upon you, the feelings threaten to drain away from your heart. You cannot use any moves that rely on your emotions or that deal additional damage until you resist the pallor's magical influence.

Blackbones

These nuns are charred black. Their blue flames cast no light, only becoming visible when illuminated by other sources. They lead the midnight raids on vagrants in the wilderness.

- Choke a foe into silence (stun damage; hand).
- Push or trip a foe to the ground.
- Tackle a foe and pin their arms (stun damage, forceful; reach).

+Devious, +Stealthy.



Flagellants

+2 damage, reach.

They lived by the lash, they retain it in death. They were the first of the nuns to lose every pound of their flesh.

- Barbed lash (1d8+4 damage, forceful; reach).
- Knock everything over.

Wormridden

+Infected by graveworms.

Nuns that tend the liquid flesh pit inside their new monastery carry graveworms on their bones. These worms are unaffected by the blue fire, but are ravenous for any kind of flesh—dead or alive, it makes no difference (although the dead are easier prey because they do not fight back).

- Embrace a foe, heedless of their attacks.
- Fling graveworms at a foe.

STATUES OF THE DEAD

In Garzburg's town square, there is a monument to **Saint Anglard** an armoured bronze statue of him atop a plaque-bearing slab of stone. Some of the deeds inscribed upon it include:

- Saint Anglard blessed the **poisoned well** in Silversmith Square, and put the ghost of the highwayman's lover to rest. Ever since, the well has flowed with sweet water.
- Saint Anglard captured a **coven of witches** in the woods outside Garzburg. After they were put on trial, some were burnt at the stake while others confessed their sins and repented. Those few were allowed to live out the rest of their lives as nuns.
- Saint Anglard rooted out the bankers of the House of Klumberk who had sold their souls to **the demon locace**, sanctifying their corrupted monies and delivering their souls from infernal servitude.
- Saint Anglard slew a **foul wyrm** that would prey upon the shepherds and their flocks. With the beast's defeat, Garzburg was once again famed for magnificent cloth and weavings.

DANGER #I: AGAINST THE MONUMENT

The death cultists will stop at nothing to destroy this monument. They have their sights set on Garzburg, and are willing to throw all their resources into this fight.

Type: Horde (Plague of the Undead). **Impulse:** To profane what is holy.

GRIM PORTENTS

- Garzburg is attacked by undead creatures in the dead of night.
- The town council enacts martial law.
- Fifth column cultists open the gates for nuns of the Bone Goddess.
- The nuns battle the monument at night.

Impending Doom: Saint Anglard's monument is toppled and the magical protection it grants to Garzburg and its surroundings is nullified.

DANGER #2: THE DREAD OF NIGHT

The nuns of the Bone Goddess are also looking for the bones of Saint Anglard, for he was powerful enough that they should be able to draw their goddess into the material plane through them.

Type: Cursed Place (Unholy Ground). **Impulse:** To imprison life in undeath.

GRIM PORTENTS

- The Black Skulls kidnap town officials and their records.
- The Black Skulls and their recruits begin digging up sections of the town at night, under the cover of darkness, to expose the scattered bones to the air.
- Skeletons walk the streets of Garzburg in broad daylight, raised by the call of the Bone Goddess.
- The nuns of the Bone Goddess begin a ritual of manifestation, either inside or outside the town.

Impending Doom: The Bone Goddess manifests upon the material plane, and there is no such thing as true death in Garzburg anymore. There is only the living and the undead.

If the statue of Saint Anglard is toppled but his bones are destroyed (or sanctified), the death cult is free to attack the city again, but they will get no help from their deities

If the statue remains intact but the Bone Goddess manifests, Saint Anglard returns to the material plane in order to fight her. He recruits mortals to his cause and fights back against the death cult. But should he fall once more, he passes on through the Black Gates of Death, forever, instead of returning to heaven.

If the statue remains and the nuns are thwarted, the town is saved, and its citizens may continue to be prosperous and law-abiding.

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THE BLIND ...

The best thing about the criminal underground is that it's so dangerous—far more dangerous than the sunlit world above, where everyone can see what you do. Down here in the depths, the lawmen die just looking for your secret hideout. These caves even have their own bouncers, ejecting the weak and unwanted, and those who nose around in business that isn't theirs. If the darkness doesn't keep you hidden, the **blind cave haunters** will. After all, you can't get your grubby hands on what you can't see, and you can't see what has already killed you.

THE HAUNT OF FEAR

"The haunted castle was built atop a great spire of rock, thrusting itself out of the surrounding hills like the hand of the Devil. Beneath that now-ruined castle, the hills and rock are riddled with caves, and in those caves dwell monsters. Many people have ventured up the heights to search through the castle's ruins, and just as many have ventured into the darkness below. But few come back.

"There was an expedition of Southern mercenaries who chased a bandit prince up into the hills, once. There was Malatri, a famous witch from the other side of the mountains, her hands covered in magic rings. Sorbalon Tepps took his entourage there, decked out in jewels and golden chains, swinging their scimitars back and forth to look like tough men. A nameless woman from the university came to see the caves specifically, and spent only one night at the inn, even though she paid for a week. The blacksmith's son says he saw her return to town at the end of the witching hour and walk right through in a daze, as if possessed, but who knows? None of those others came back. They just went into the caves and disappeared.

"There was that sailor stayed here and he said a pirate captain has buried a chest full of gold under the castle. He didn't come back but the young lad with him did. Barely said a word about it, but he paid for his last night with some strange-looking coins. Never seen the like of them before, but they were gold alright, so no complaints from me.

"You're going up there too, huh? Tell you what, leave your stuff down here with me and I'll look after it for you until you come back. That way, you won't have to worry none. What's the matter? Why you lookin' at me like that?"

... EATING THE BLIND

Many go into these caves, in search of criminal monsters. Not all of them are sent by the law, for as we all know there is no honour among thieves. Do they ever reach those legendary hideouts after the cave mouths swallow them up? Are there really vaults full of riches, or a casino, even, so full of strange creatures? Or are they just swallowed for real by these monsters, and not metaphorically?

CAVES FULL OF GHOSTS

Not everyone who has searched through the castle ruins or entered the caves below it has disappeared, however. There are those who come back, who speak of the horrors they have seen.

First of all, they do say there is most definitely **treasure** to be found there, underground. They have seen the gold glinting in their torchlight. But they say that it is trapped, that all who reach out for treasures are doomed to a grisly death. More than one scoundrel has returned an honest man, a witness to the wages of sin.

And then there are also the **ghosts** that haunt the caves. They are said to be the spirits of treasure-seekers who died of hunger and thirst, lost in the darkness of the caves.

CAVES FULL OF TRAPS

But if they are ghosts, then who left these traps everywhere? As if hunger and thirst were not bad enough, the blind cave haunter sets snares to trap intruders.

- **Collapsing Boulders:** They might look like primitive art, like rocks stacked one atop the other. But when you approach, they fall!
- Net Snare: As you walk across the debris-strewn cave floor, a net springs up all around you, catching you inside it, leaving you hanging from the ceiling, unable to move.
- **Pit Trap:** It may seem like the floor is covered in wooden boards, nailed together, but they fall apart easily enough—when you walk across them!
- Quicksand Trap: The floor looks solid enough, but beneath the mold and fungus there is soft, wet mud, sucking you down into it, where you will drown.
- **Spike Trap:** A hidden tripwire is sprung! A wooden branch, bent back is now released, springing toward you to drive the wooden stake that is tied to it into your body.

THE CRIMINAL UNDERGROUND

BLIND CAVE HAUNTER

Hoarder, Large, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Blind, Sonar.

Because it is not a small creature, and these mountains have all sizes of caves in them, the blind cave haunter has had to be clever when hunting its prey. It cannot rely on brute strength and speed alone, lest a potential meal flee into a space too small for it to reach.

Instinct: To draw treasure-seekers into the caves and devour them. Attacks:

• Infected claws (1d10+3 damage, forceful, infected; close, reach).

Moves:

- Find foes by sonar.
- Leave a shiny coin as bait.
- Set traps and snares.
- Stalk the caves silently.

Tactics:

When killed: Haunt the killer as a ghost. When they enter the caves: Draw them in

with hints of treasure.

When they trigger a trap: Sneak up to seize and devour them.

Weaknesses:

The blind cave haunter explores its surroundings through touch and sound. Because it has no senses to detect light (other than heat), it is not very good at hiding in shadows, only sneaking around in darkness. Magical silence destroys half its ability to perceive things, even worse than blinding or deafening is for a human.

Cave haunters also avoid ghosts like the plague, because they are reminded of their own dead, which is terrifying to them. If you have control over ghosts or a ghost-possessed magical item, blind cave haunters want nothing to do with you.

INFECTION

If you are clawed by a blind cave haunter, unless you clean your wounds very carefully, they can become infected. This causes you to feel intense hunger and thirst for 1d6 days. While infected, you are in danger of consuming all your rations and other food and drink (including alcohol and magic potions) immediately. When given the opportunity to consume more food and drink, you are in danger of doing so compulsively.

If you try to defy this danger, say how and roll for it. To get rid of the infection for good, though, you need the attentions of a healer.



16 HP 2 Armour

45

HAUNTING

These creatures are not merely predators in life, but also in death. **If you kill a blind cave haunter,** its ghost returns to haunt you. It cannot be harmed by mundane weaponry aside from the one that killed it, but it also cannot kill you—only beat you unconscious. Though if you suffer this haunting for long enough, you may come to long for death

GHOST OF A BLIND CAVE HAUNTER 12 HP o Armour

Large, Planar, Solitary, Terrifying.

Special Qualities: Insubstantial, Undead.

The ghost returns to haunt the one that killed it. Always at the most opportune time, often unseen by others, it strikes. In these caves, vengeance is stronger than death.

Instinct: To haunt its killer.

Attacks:

• Pummel (1d8 damage, non-fatal; close, reach).

Moves:

- Appear from out of nowhere.
- Trash inanimate objects like a poltergeist.

Weaknesses:

The ghost is tied to its killer, and also to the weapon that killed it. While most mundane weapons pass through it, to no effect, the weapon that killed it can always kill it again—for good this time. Magical weapons can also harm the ghost, though it does not know this.

THE EYEBALL SYNDICATE

Deep within the bowels of the Earth there lives a strange race of magical creatures. They appear to be a giant, floating eyeball with thin, flexible arms flanking a wide and blubbering mouth, and both ragged-looking wings and a reptilian tail extending from its rear side. Some say they were born from the eye of Blorcas, god of wizards, when Gozmo Zalandros stole it and absorbed its power. But Blorcas has been blind and speechless, floating inert through the astral darkness, for near ten thousand years, if the sages are to be believed. So perhaps the bards have it right when they sing of Qianoa summoning them from beyond the scope of Saturn with her rituals.

Whatever their source, they have been a thorn in the side of human expansion for centuries, crawling out of their caves to wreak havoc and mayhem. But recently, the situation has taken a turn for the worse, for now they have a ruler to unite them in their malevolence. **Zebbagrulom** has crowned himself the king of the eye fuckers, and he has so far led them to victory against all the underground kingdoms they have met in battle. If his effusive braggadocio is indeed the truth, he has countless slaves and soldiers at his beck and call.

Zebbagrulom rules over his subterranean empire, and the other eye fuckers, with an iron fist and a honeyed tongue. He knows how to successfully organize all types of criminal enterprise, and he speaks all the tongues of the upper world. Completely lacking in remorse for the fates of other races, he trades in all manner of vices, inhumane diversions, and shady goods.

SOMETHING INTERESTING

Zebbagrulom continues to kick back a toll to the Casino Syndicate in order to operate. But he's always been ambitious, and those close to him know that living in the casino's shadow is chaffing.



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ZEBBAGRULOM

16 HP o Armour Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Magical, Organized, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Charismatic, Flying.

Zebbagrulom gained his superior intellect by devouring wizards. He has become quite fond of wizard flesh since then, and will pay handsomely for captive, living wizards. He much prefers the ones who still have spells memorized, squirming inside their brains. If anyone should deliver a wizard to him, he will gleefully bestow upon them a paralytic poison that they can use on other wizards in the future, so they can be immobilized and brought before the king of the eye fuckers before they cast their spells.

Instinct: To aggrandize himself and propagate his greatness.

Attacks:

Eye beams (Idio damage, I piercing; close, reach, near).

Moves:

- Call servitors.
- Create illusory copies of eye fuckers.
- Destroy equipment with eye beam blasts.
- Emit a bilious cloud of smoke.
- Fly away from close combat threats. •
- Monologue about own greatness. •
- Offer to strike a deal, of a dubious, immoral, or outright . criminal nature.
- Reveal a trap within his lair. •
- Shoot a beam of weakness (near, area, imposes weak debility).

Tactics:

If they are a threat: Buy them off.

If they are weak: Strike decisively.

If they can't be bought: Look for something to coerce or blackmail them with.

If they can't be coerced: Have them killed.

Weaknesses:

With only his eccentricity matching his highly-developed mental functions, Zebbagrulom has a very strange sense of style. He is very fond of looking flashy, standing out, and being noticed first, before all others. He is jealous of others who receive more attention than he does. He is also easily manipulated by female eye fuckers, in spite of his advanced brain power. He is even aware of this, but cannot help himself.

EYE FUCKER MINION

16 HP o Armour

Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Organized. Special Qualities: Flying.

Unlike Zebbagrulom, the normal eye fuckers are a rather dull and tedious lot. They dislike the intellectual arts, and those who follow Zebbagrulom have decided it is best to leave the thinking up to him, and simply reap the rewards of obedience.

Instinct: To dominate the other races.

Attacks:

• Eye beams (Idio damage, I piercing; close, reach, near).

Moves:

- Call servitors.
- Destroy equipment with eye beam blasts.
- Fly away from close combat threats.
- Manipulate Zebbagrulom (if female).
- Shoot a beam of weakness (near, area, imposes weak debility).

Tactics:

When they threaten Zebbagrulom's enterprises: Destroy them. When Zebbagrulom commands: Obey. His plans are foolproof!

Weaknesses:

As much as eye fucker minions find tedious and repetitive tasks easy to accomplish, especially if they have someone to remind them of their goals on a regular basis, they become bored quite easily if they are required to do any amount of real thinking.

SOMETHING USEFUL

Zebbagrulom handles most of his criminal business out of an office in a cave up the side of Skull Mountain, which is hidden from below. Look for the vine-covered ridge, that's it.

RIVALRIES

The Eyeball Syndicate has dealings with numerous other underworld factions.

THE CASINO SYNDICATE

Of the two criminal syndicates, the casino is by far the more successful operation. Zebbagrulom is looking to diversify, get into the illegal drug trade, and get out of high-end gambling altogether at least until he's got enough clout to take the suckering worms out for good.

CHAOS CULTISTS

Two things the devotees of chaos seem to like more than anything are drugs and gambling, so the Eyeball Syndicate accommodates them. But many cultists of chaos are also wizards, which makes Zebbagrulom cast his hungry eye in their directions. Always on the lookout for someone to devour, he will start a war with chaos over even the most trivial of matters. But he is just as likely to agree to terms and go back to peaceful relations.

DEATH CULTISTS

Zebbagrulom dislikes the death worshippers more than all the others. His preferred method of dealing with them is to create buffer states. He gets other gangs to fight the death cult on his behalf, or feeds them information about his enemies so he doesn't have to fight. There is no winning a war against these psychopathic zealots, he says, and they are too strong to exterminate. The best plan is just to wait for them to either burn out or fade away.

DRAGON CULTISTS

Zebbagrulom has encountered dragons before and knows they are nothing to fuck with. These cultists don't have a dragon to worship yet, though, so the Eyeball Syndicate isn't afraid of them at all. If he has to make a deal, Zebbagrulom deals, but if these dragon-lovers need to get taught a lesson...

THE SHROOM GANG

Former wizards who now eat brains? This is Zebbagrulom's idea of a culinary delicacy. He cares nothing for their plans or their operations. He just wants to eat them like the mushrooms they are.

NEFARIOUS PLOTS

These are some of the dastardly schemes Zebbagrulom might have cooked up that can interfere with the plans of the PCs:

A BAD DEAL

Zebbagrulom takes an interest in the PCs. While in town, he has corrupt officials arrest them and issue them a steep fine. Then he has one of his more-charismatic minions approach them and offer them a deal. All they have to do is deliver a mysterious package unopened, naturally—to a nearby town (where they have a good reputation), and their indiscretions here will be forgiven.

POISONED WATERS

Zebbagrulom has suborned a human cult into following his commands. He has incontrovertible evidence of their illegal religious activities, and has offered them a deal. They must slip a huge batch of polymorph potion into the local water supplies. All the people who might care about their activities will be transformed into animals—or worse!—and they will be free to pursue their interests after the town has been conquered by Zebbagrulom.

SPIES LIKE US

A mysterious stranger wants to hire the PCs to smuggle them into a city. They say the metropolitan officials are prejudiced oppressors that only project a tolerant image. The stranger only wants to get in and warn some friends and allies about hostilities from a neighbouring city. In reality, the hostilities are coming from Zebbagrulom, and this stranger is his spy and saboteur.

WAR PIGS

Zebbagrulom has convinced his minions to masquerade as some other faction while they attack his criminal rivals, in the hopes of sparking open war between the two groups—instead of with his own syndicate. How has he done this? Has he retained the services of numerous tailors? Does he have an illusionist in his employ, whom he has someone managed to leave undevoured?

When the PCs are attacked, are they able to see through this ruse? What do they say to the people who fall for it? There will also be those who know it is a trick, but want to go to war with those the Eyeball Syndicate is pretending to be anyway.

IN, CASINO, OUT

Few adventurers know of the suckering worm. They never see it, never get that far into the monstrous underground world that lives beneath us—or never return, even if they do. But the monsters know the worms. They are famous, especially amongst the betting kind. For the **suckering worms** run the most famous and prestigious gambling ring in all the underworld.

The game is simple. Each monster brings a piece of treasure to the worms, to prove their ability. This buys them into the games. The worms allow newcomers to join a small group of other monsters. Each of them must go out and procure a single, valuable piece of treasure and present it at the group's next meeting. Whoever presents the most valuable treasure—decided by a secret vote wins all treasure save the cheapest in value, which the worms keep as their share. Monsters who show some ingenuity and drive whether they win or not—are allowed to join ever more prestigious groups of gamblers. Some crafty monsters have been able to amass hoards worth several mortal fortunes simply by risking a few choice pieces.

But all is not quite as it seems, for the suckering worm does not get its name for nothing. It well knows how to lure the foolish into its gluttonous maw, whether they be human or not. Their games are not rigged, for why should they care? They have already lured those who participate in their casinos in, they need only sucker them along until it is time to devour them. If a monster loses too many times, earning the contempt of others, it is easy enough to make them disappear without creating comment. And if a group of truly heavyweight treasure-thieves assemble and present to each other a horde of the ages... well, they too might disappear, along with all their ill-gotten gains. Even if word does get around, there are always more monsters to desperate and greedy to heed the warnings of their fellows.



SUCKERING WORM

10 HP 2 Armour

Devious, Group, Intelligent, Large, Organized, Planar, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Floating, Telepathic speech.

The suckering worm organizes itself into small groups when working a casino, but often hunts individually as well. Its telepathic communication is rough at best, but works well enough for gambling. It has better luck communicating numbers, symbols, and simple concepts like "win" or "lose" than it does having a conversation, even one filled with banal pleasantries and meaningless observations about the weather.

The worm comes from a dimension full of light, where brightness is as common as the air above and the ground below. It can see through light, and illusions made of light. Its brain cannot be tricked to see light in different ways. It can trick others into believing illusory sensations, however, and has the ability to produce the smell of blood—a favourite of so many monsters.

The Syndicate Illuminati who lead the other worms are often stronger, faster, and smarter, since they are infused with more magical energies. Such saturation happens naturally, over time, but can also be accelerated through artificial contact with magic.

Instinct: To take advantage of others.

Attacks:

- Beak (1d8+1 damage; close, reach).
- Blinding flash (stun; close, near).
- Surround and constrict (1d6, immobilizing, damage increases by +2 on each subsequent squeeze; close).

Moves:

- Ambush foes from above, or from darkness.
- Creep along the ceiling or the roof of a cave.
- Float through the air.
- Produce light.
- Produce the smell of blood to attract monsters.
- See through visual illusions.
- Sense psychic abilities.

Tactics:

If they are psychic: Attack and destroy!

If they come to gamble: Evaluate their gift, or their present standing, and allow or deny accordingly.

If they crash the casino: Defend the casino patrons above all. Attack the intruders swiftly and drive them away or kill them.

If they have desires: Find out what they want and lure them to their deaths with promises.

Weaknesses:

Even though it comes from a world filled with light, the suckering worm hates wide, open spaces. It much prefers to live underground or in dense built environments. Like rats, the worm always want a solid wall to one side of it.

It also hates magical darkness and arcane shadows, because its light cannot penetrate. These magics create literal dead zones that destroy the suckering worm's perceptions.

Finally, because of its telepathic reception, the suckering worm is more vulnerable than most creates are to psychic attacks and invasions. Because of this, the worm fears and despises powerful psychics and mind-warriors, and goes out of its way to destroy them.

THE HOUSE OF CHANCE

While suckering worms in every land play their games and agree to wagers, their cultural capital on this plane remains the casino called the **House of Chance**. Perhaps the greatest of all gambling houses, this casino is run by the greatest of suckering worms, the secret master of not only the physical establishment, but also of the criminal organization known as the Casino Syndicate.

It is a golden, shimmering palace where some dreams come true, but most are crushed and shattered. It offers a promise of hope that ends in squalor for all but the luckiest, smartest, or most politically connected. The House of Chance is all these things and more, a glittering paradise of pleasure and luxury, most of it false, and none of it free.

Some say the gambling houses of the surface world take their cues from this great edifice the suckering worms have created. Their protégés of all species have dispersed to the four winds, using these same techniques to scam their fellows out of the fortunes they worked so hard to amass. Could it be that this trend is really part of the process of invasion? That these strange creatures from another world have not only conquered the criminal underground of the monsters, but also the human world as well? And if this is so, how much longer will it be until they own even the crowns that govern us?

THE WAGES OF SIN

When a suckering worm has a singularly valuable pieces of treasure, as all Syndicate Illuminati do, roll 1d12 to determine what it is:

- I Alchemical writings of rare quality.
- 2 Arrangement of multicoloured gemstones.
- 3 Clockwork automaton of ingenious design.
- **4** Crystalline sculpture incorporating optical illusions.
- 5 Decorative alien jewellery made of curious materials.
- 6 Decorative humanoid jewellery made of precious materials.
- 7 Exquisitely-decorated implements of war.
- 8 Landscape painting of another world.
- 9 Landscape painting of a terrestrial place, done in a weird style.
- 10 Light-producing device of singular origin.
- **II** A living creature, turned to stone or preserved in fluid.
- 12 Magical, possibly spell-producing, object.

When a suckering worm, or even some other employee of the Casino Syndicate, possesses other items of value, roll 10100 to determine what each of them are:

I	3,000-year-old violin.	17	Cape made of feathers.
2	Altar of an important god.	18	Carved ivory walking stick.
3	Ambergris wrapped in sealskin.	19	China vase.
4	Ancient canopic jar.	20	Clock.
5	Behemoth drinking horn.	21	Copper cutlery set.
6	Belt buckle set with turquoise.	22	Crystal sphere half-full of water.
7	Black velvet painting.	23	Crystal spheres fused together.
8	Bones of a saint.	24	Cup made from a wizard's skull.
9	Bonsai tree with jade leaves.	25	Cut crystal decanter.
10	Book of woodcut pornography.	26	Decorative sword set with rubies.
п	Bottle of prestigious wine.	27	Diamond earrings.
12	Box of frankincense.	28	Diamond the size of a hen's egg.
13	Box of myrrh.	29	Dog made of orange glass.
14	Bronze head.	30	Dragon leather scabbard.
15	Bronze plate etched with symbols.	31	Elaborately engraved suit of plate.
16	Cape embroidered with gold.	32	Embroidered silk robe.

IN, CASINO, OUT 57

33 Emerale	d shaped like a flower.	67	Onyx jewel box.
34 Famous	artist's sketchbook.	68	Opal bracelet.
35 Fancy s	ilk slippers.	69	Orchid bulbs.
36 Fine for	eign rug.	70	Orichalcum warhorn.
37 Flower	of immortality.	7 1	Ornamental crystal scorpion.
38 Folk art	animal carving.	72	Pearl necklace.
39 Gilded,	jewelled crown.	73	Platinum tiara.
40 Glass ja	r of unknown liquid.	74	Porcelain tea set.
41 Gold ar	nd iron brazier.	75	Rock sculptures by famous artist.
42 Goldan	d silver door knocker.	76	Royal mace.
43 Gold ba	ars.	77	Royal portrait in oils.
44 Gold ch	nain.	78	Royal wedding ring.
45 Golden	candlestick.	79	Satyr face carved of sardonyx.
46 Golden	throne.	80	Signet ring of a royal house.
47 Gorgon	eion shield.	81	Silk scarf.
48 Hand o	f glory.	82	Silver chain.
49 Heart-s	haped silver locket.	83	Silver flute.
50 Hourgla	ass made of bones.	84	Silver necklace with sapphires.
51 Ivory ar	nklet.	85	Silver salt shaker.
52 Jade am	ulet.	86	Small carnelian unicorn.
53 Jade and	d marble chess set.	87	Snuff box with mosaic inlay.
54 Jewelled	l sarcophagus.	88	Soapstone statue of a fox.
55 Leviath	an shell.	89	Spellbook.
56 Magic a	rrows.	90	Spyglass.
57 Magic s	hield.	91	Stained glass window.
58 Magic v	veapon.	92	Sunstone dagger.
59 Magical	mirror.	93	Sword made of meteorite.
60 Magical	ring.	94	Taxidermied chimera.
61 Mahoga	any cigar box.	95	Tiger skin rug.
62 Marble	statue.	96	Tiny face carved from opal.
63 Metal fa	ace mask.	97	Vase of indestructible glass.
64 Norther	rn landscape painting.	98	Vial of perfume.
65 Obscen	e demon sculpture.	99	White gold drinking stein.
66 Obsidia		100	Wood mask from a dead culture.
COLORADO DE LA COLORA			

THE LAW

The world of crime isn't only thugs and thieves. Those charged with enforcing the law have a presence as well, though they are not always easy to distinguish from the villains.

REWARDED SEVENFOLD

Known variously as **Mandrake the Mighty** and **Mandrake the Mastermind of Mystery**, Armando van Heldenwall was once a mere stage magician, fighting other conjurers over who gets to be named "Mandrake." But over time, he has accomplished his greatest act of sleight of hand yet, and now he is one of the most influential wizards in the entire kingdom.

From arcane tomes of dubious provenance, he learned real sorcery, and in the shadows of law and order, he built a criminal empire. His role in the shadowy crime syndicate known as the **Black Fang**—the syndicate he created and runs—is still unknown, but his connection to one of the Black Fang's local franchises has been discovered.

The Springvale gang known as the **Serpents** has been waging a turf war against the **River Rats**, and Mandrake has stepped in to show their charlatans and illusionists a few useful tricks. With any luck, the Serpents can "take a bite out" of their competition and solidify the Black Fang's hold on the upper reaches of the River Knife.

But the Church of Law is on to them. Their chief field operative, the paladin **Chigo Ondawme** has been investigating the affiliations of various thieves' guilds with the Black Fang, and he has followed Mandrake back to his magical sanctum. Chigo's informants have confirmed the sanctum's location, and "rough interrogation" of high-ranking enforcers from within the Black Fang has convinced him that Mandrake has no other secret hideouts. If this one is the only one there is, it must be the heart and soul of Mandrake's criminal empire. If there is any hard evidence of this syndicate's business dealings to be found, where else would it be kept but in the wizard's most private place?

All he needs to do now is break in and find it. The proverbs say that whoever steals from a thief is rewarded sevenfold, but what of those who steal in the name of the law? Is their reward not so much greater for it not being true theft, but the righteous confiscation of the wages of sin? Certainly, Chigo wouldn't tell you any different.

CHIGO THE PALADIN

Divine, Intelligent, Organized.

10 HP 3 Armour

Chigo is one of the Church of Law's most widely-travelled operatives. He speaks a dozen different languages and knows the local customs of twice as many kingdoms. Though he holds only one certificate of legal aptitude—granted to him by St. Labrum on the edge of the Zakhab Wastes—he is nonetheless a passionate enemy of crime and a vocal advocate of peace, law, and order. **Instinct:** To punish those who profit from crime.

Attacks:

• Sword (1d10+1 damage, 1 piercing; close).

Moves:

- Consult the gods of law and justice.
- Extract important details from legal prosecutors.
- Gain assistance from temples devoted to the gods of law.
- Orate loudly on the merits of a legal lifestyle, as opposed to the wages of sin (which are usually death, if one commits enough crimes before being caught).

Tactics:

When they defy the law: Punish them, no matter what it takes. When they show genuine remorse: Give them a second chance (but not a third).

Weaknesses:

Chigo's zeal to root out and destroy organized thieves' guilds leads him to break the law himself on many occasions. He feels he is right to do so, for the law cannot apply to its enforcers as equally as it does to civilians and criminals. His superiors have censured him before and expect they will have to do so again. As soon as he stops getting the results they want, their support will vanish.

"The law *is the law*, and those who flaunt it will feel my wrath—the wrath of justice!"



THORAKHIM THE RANGER

Intelligent, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Infected.

Chigo's sidekick in this scheme is a half-orc named Thorakhim. He was born to human parents in Kielhafen, where his name used to be James, but he contracted a disease while fighting assassins of the Black Fang in the Spritewood as a young ranger. He developed orcish features soon after and was forced to resign his commission with the rangers and go freelance.

He has grown more direct in his approaches since then, less interested in nuance and subtlety. He has teamed up with Chigo because he believes in direct action against crime and disorder. If spineless bureaucrats are allowed to control society, more young rangers will suffer just like he did, or even worse. Evil cannot be allowed to fester unhindered!

Instinct: To take by force.

Attacks:

- Bow (1d8 damage, 1 piercing; near, far).
- Hunting knife (1d10 damage, forceful; close).

Moves:

- Identify plants and animals.
- Move stealthily through the wilderness.
- Track a foe through the wilderness.

Tactics:

When a fight starts: Try to end it as fast as possible.

When the orcish rage arises: Fight it, unless violence is necessary.

Weaknesses:

Thorakhim is not welcome amongst his old associates, ever since his orcish traits became obvious. He hates this part of his nature, and fights against it whenever he can.

"Listen, buddy. I didn't ask to look like this, okay? I'm just trying to get through life like anybody else. I'm not the villain here."



10 HP 1 Armour

GOBLINIZATION

The features of the so-called "goblinoid races" are infectious, as Thorakhim has discovered, to his great shame. Although he believes there is a cure in the magician's sanctum, he does not understand how he was infected. Maybe it happens one (or more) of these ways:

- Consuming orcish or goblinoid biological material.
- Killing a champion of the orc gods without being purified after.
- Orc shamans cast a spell on you.
- Violating ground that is sacred to the orcish gods.

The progression of the orcish infection in a PC or an NPC can follow a series of grim portents, just like any other danger.

GRIM PORTENTS

- You can speak the tongues of goblins, orcs, and wolves (and perhaps some other foul creatures!). You also gain an orcish name.
- You grow claws, horns, or tusks.
- Your physical form changes. If your Charisma is higher than your Strength, swap these two scores. If your Intelligence is higher than your Constitution, swap these two scores.
- When you fight, you are in danger of going berserk.

Impending Doom: Full transformation into an orcish creature. Have you become a stunted, tiny goblin? A brutal orcish warrior? Or a gigantic, lumbering troll?

Each time one of the following situations happens, you are in danger of the infection progressing:

- When you are poisoned.
- When you consume the blood, flesh, or other parts of goblin and orc bodies.
- When you lose a fight to orcs or goblins.
- When your current hit points are reduced by half, or more, at once.

When you are infected, you learn about the following custom move (if the GM has decided to use it):

GOBLINSPEAK

When you parley with orcs and goblins, roll+STR instead of CHA.

PERILOUS TREASURES

For Mandrake, whether mighty or mysterious, the wages of sin have purchased a great deal more than simply gold and jewels. But he has spent most of his ill-gotten gains on arcane expertise—both on books of spells that increase his personal power, and on magical items that help him run his criminal empire.

Most of these things he keeps hidden away in safes, buried beneath his house, behind an elaborate array of traps. Only a few, select treasures are displayed in the rooms of his house, and one of them is not what it appears to be at all. **In his bedroom**—or rather, in a room with a fancy, four-poster bed that no one ever sleeps in there sit a large, finely-carved chest, right next to a showpiece shelf full of old, counterfeit books and a few golden trinkets.

It looks like it contains the wizard's valuables. It doesn't.

THE MAGICIAN'S TREASURE CHEST 12 HP 3 Armour

Devious, Stealthy.

The fake treasure chest resembles a giant clam or mussel. It's shell is hard and thick, and inside it contains one or more worm-like creatures, each of which has a mouth, tongue, and numerous eyes. One end of each worm is attached to the inside of the shell and also sports several fluted limbs that create sound and hold the gills. The other end has a horrible mouth full of spiny teeth and a rough, scraping tongue. These mouths do not create sound. The worm's numerous eyes can see in various spectrums, both mundane and magical.

Did Mandrake himself carve his creature's shell into the shape of a chest, which now looks exactly like it might contain valuable treasures? Or did he purchase this specimen pre-carved, from another wizard? Who could possibly have had a surplus of such exquisite traps, in order to let one go?

Instinct: To surprise.

Attacks:

• Vicious mouths (1d10 damage, messy; close).

Moves:

- Appear to be a normal chest.
- Emit weird piping noises.
- Shuffle slowly across the floor.

Tactics:

The chest does nothing until it is tampered with, and then it attacks. Certain spells are needed to pacify the creature and keep it from attacking its owner, or the carvers of its shell. Mandrake knows these spells by heart.

Weaknesses:

This creature is overly fond of umami flavours, and will reveal itself in order to greedily devour cooked mushrooms and pursue other such savoury aromas.

When you are surprised by the treasure chest, roll+DEX. On a **10+**, your reflexes are too fast for the boxworm! You may attack it, grab it, or dodge away from it before it can harm you. On a **7-9**, if you attack, you are bitten and if you dodge it latches onto your equipment (but not your flesh). On a 6 or less, you are easy prey!



THE SHROOM GANG

These humanoid fungal monstrosities result from an unholy pact, made long ago between sorcerers and demons. It is written, in the *Book of Caves*, that the demons allowed these sorcerers to transcend their mortal forms, but at the cost of their souls. What was left of them melded into the giant, magical fungus that grew in their secret underground temple, creating the hybrid mockeries of mankind that are the **Myconians**.

As predators of the humans, the Myconians are feared and hated, condemned to live deep underground, lest they arouse suspicion and reprisals. They have made deals with dark necromancers and the spawn of evil gods, always furthering their desire to enslave humanity in its entirety.

MYCONIAN

9 HP 2 Armour

Cautious, Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized. **Special Qualities:** Made of fungus.

Each Myconian is a mass of fungus in the shape of a human figure. It must consume human brain in order to maintain this form and the human-like intelligence that allows it to function properly. Without a regular supply, a Myconian will revert to mindless plant matter.

Instinct: To consume the brains of humans. **Attacks:**

- Cloud of spores (stun damage; reach).
- Strange with wiry hands (1d8 damage; hand, close).

Moves:

- Carry off an unconscious foe.
- Perform obscene rituals that debase humanity.
- Release pheromones that cause plants to react.

Tactics:

If they look weak: Attack them and take their brains.

If they offer valuable goods: Trade with them.

When outnumbered: Flee. Or surrender and try to escape later.

Weaknesses:

The Myconians have few distinct vulnerabilities save for the fact that other dwellers of the underground world hate them so much. They have beefs with every other gang, and alliances with none. Anyone attempting to fight the Shroom Gang head on may well find assistance and information unexpectedly, and freely, available.

THE MUSHROOM LAIR

The lair of the Myconians can be accessed by two different tunnels. To the south is the **main entrance**, which leads to the main meeting area (room 1). Even though this entrance is known to a few outsiders, it is not usually guarded very well. To the east there is a **secret entrance** that is the usual passage taken by the Myconians. It is guarded (see room 3) in order to keep those who stumble upon it from revealing its location.

I. MEETING AREA

The Myconians meet strangers in this cave if they have arranged a deal to exchange goods. Only a small, select group of corrupt sorcerers and desperate criminals deal with them on a regular basis. The cave is covered in **phosphorescent fungus**. If this light is disturbed—by people moving through the cave, for example—the Myconians in nearby rooms may take notice.

2. FUNGAL GARDEN

This vast cave is stocked with all manner of fungi, molds, and other strange plants. A few **Myconians** (maybe 1 to 6) are always present to tend to this garden. They are usually engrossed in their tasks and may not notice intruders at first. In spite of the garden's highly organized layout, it is still impossible for those untrained in fungiculture to determine what any specific species can be used for.

3. GUARD ROOM

A squad of **3 to 6 Myconians** are always stationed here, unless they have been called away to deal with intruders in the meeting room. This entrance is kept secret, and these Myconians are here to ensure it remains a secret, in case it is found by accident.

4. STORE ROOM

The Myconians keep all manner of useful **mundane items** here, including some mining tools, weapons (which they seldom use themselves), wooden beams, lengths of chain, barrels of preserved food (for the prisoners), and even some spare clothes.

5. TREASURE ROOM

This low-vaulted cave is where the Myconians stash all the things that humans consider valuable, including bags of **coins and gems**.



6. TEMPLE

This square room was carved from the living rock by hand. **Eight pillars** hold up the vaulted ceiling above an enormous, **bloodstained altar**. The Myconians conduct their rituals here, include the consumption of human brains—the practice that gives them the humanoid forms and intelligence that they value so much.

About half the time, here is a group of 1 to 5 Myconains here, conducting a ritual, studying magical charts, or meditating.

A **narrow tunnel** leads from the temple to the balcony above the mine. It is not an obvious exit, but neither is it hidden.

7. ALCHEMICAL LABORATORY

A rudimentary alchemical lab has been set up in this cave, even though the heavy traffic that comes through here causes the occasional **accident**. It is not uncommon for two or more Myconians to become engaged in an argument over spilled materials.

The lab is stocked with numerous types of caustic and poisonous substances, mutated fungi, and pieces of special ore.

When you knock things over in the alchemical lab, roll+DEX. On a 10+, you avoid the fallout and you can put someone else between you and it. On a 7-9, you can avoid the fallout but it costs you. The GM will tell you what. On a 6 or less, a mishap occurs.

Alchemical mishaps fallout table (roll 1d12):

- I Acidic liquid pours over everything.
- 2 A cloud of poison gas is created.
- 3 A cloud of spores erupts (see room 5).
- 4 Everyone suffers an infection that changes their skin colour.
- 5 An explosive substance, hard and solid, is created.
- 6 Highly flammable liquid is spilled.
- 7 A homunculus is created.
- 8 A horrible stench is unleashed.
- 9 Itching powder explodes all over everything.
- 10 Mutagenic liquid is spilled across the floor.
- **II** A random magical spell effect occurs (roll 1d6 for level, then roll on the spell list for that level).
- 12 Things catch fire.

8. SMALL MEETING ROOM

Myconians meet here to socialize, dine, and make plans for the future. The hallway leading to the mine is covered in **mold**. Any non-chaotic creature who walks through this hallway triggers the mold to release clouds of infectious spores.

If you breathe the mold spores, you become infected by the mold, and lose 1d4 HP per day, which cannot be healed until the infection is cured. If you are infected and reach zero HP, a cloud of mold spores explodes from your body.

9. BALCONY

A narrow tunnel leads from the temple to the mine, and exits at the back of a **high balcony**. From here, one can look down upon the whole mine. The edge of the balcony is a sheer cliff, 20 feet high.

IO. THE MINE

This immense cave is only partly natural. A good section of it has been mined, for there is a vein of some strange, mystical ore located here that the Myconians use in their alchemical experiments.

Human prisoners are made to toil here until they are too weak to go on and then their brains are consumed in the temple. Those who have tried to escape fall victim to the mold spores before they get to the small meeting room. There are always 2 to 12 slaves at work, no matter what time of day or night.

II. PRISON

The prisoners are kept here in chains when they are not working. This cave is a filthy, squalid mess. There are always 2 to 8 prisoners sleeping here, though their rest is barely adequate, given the awful conditions.

SNAKE EYES

"There weren't always monsters haunting Skull Mountain. Back in the old days, it used to just be a big hill that sort of looked like a skull. These days, there's monsters all over it. They have some sort of cult up there, with demon worship, and human sacrifice!

"This one adventurin' type, he told me how he got hisself kidnapped by them. They took him down to a cave at the very bottom of the mountain, and they left him there. It was huge, he said! And covered in smoke coming out of cracks in the floor. He saw so many terrible things down there, he said, but the worst of all of them was Snake Eyes. Some kind of flying head, wielding swords, with actual snakes instead of eyes! He managed to escape because he ran the fastest—everyone else was cut down.

"Or that's the tale he told, anyway. Can't rightly say if it were true or not, didn't see it myself. I saw some of those other fellers who was with him before he went up to the mountain, though, and then I never saw them again after, so I believe it. Listen, son. There's monsters up there, damn right, and they're killers, even if they don't feed people to the Snake Eyes."

THE HELL BELOW THE MOUNTAIN

If there's one thing criminal monsters should know how to do, it's get rid of people they don't like. They know how to murder, and torture, and burn villages down to the ground. They probably eat people without a second thought. Sacrificing people to their gods might even be more advantageous to them than leaving humans alive! So why would they beat someone senseless, then drag them all the way out to that blasted, smoking hellscape and leave them still alive!—for Snake Eyes to take care of?

Because they never come back. See, here's the thing about monsters and wizards and evil creatures from other dimensions: they're real good at curses. They just seem to have a knack for finding ways of getting payback for anything you do to them. And the worst of all curses a being can pronounce is always reserved for their killer. If you don't have the magic to handle a curse, don't be the one who deals that final blow. Don't be the one who pours the last of a witch's heart's blood out onto the ground. Don't be the one whose arrow meets the dragon's brain. Don't eat the wizards whose bodies are infused with poison. Just leave them all for Snake Eyes. He doesn't care, he's fucking invincible.

ORIGIN STORIES

Where does Snake Eyes come from? No one really knows. Is the land he patrols even underground, or is it just never seen by day? There are many theories, but few things we know for certain. This may have more to do with the way theory-writers do things than with the survivability of explorers, of course.

THE BLASTED PLAIN OF SMOKE

Two hundred thousand years ago, a nation of warriors built a city upon a river whose name has long since been lost in time. Such is the weight of years, even, that the river itself has disappeared, leaving only a blasted wasteland full of cracks and fissures that belch poisonous smoke. But even though the river, and its city, are gone, those warriors have not completely disappeared. One of their champions—the best of the best, from all the ages they lived—has never died, not in all those millennia. All that is left of him is a giant flying head, with wings and snakes for eyes and a pair of dangling, gangrenous arms, each one bearing an ancient sword made of bronze.

This undead thing roams the blasted plains at night, preying on those unwise enough to venture through them. For the blasted plains are full of toxic smoke whenever the sun goes down. As the earth cools, away from the sun's glorious light, all these fissures belch forth the smoke that eats away at the minds of men.

Or that's what you read in the book. You've never been to these lands before, and the locals all stay out of those plains, even during the day. But they are just peasants. What do they know, really?

THE ELEMENTAL PLANE OF MADNESS

Or perhaps this plain is not even part of the material world at all? A few great sages speak of an "elemental plane of madness" that is mostly hypothetical, but could account for certain real experiences. If this blasted landscape were in some other realm, however, it would have no need for a sky, or daylight. You could wander in and out of it by doors unseen—your body would not even have to travel alongside your mind!

Perhaps the fissures in the ground represent a faltering sanity, made tangible by the magic of the multiverse? Perhaps the smoke that billows forth represents the obscuration of senses that is the essential nature of madness, perhaps of the universe itself, or...

Well, as I said, it's just a theory. There's no need to be so rude!

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

When you brave the toxic smoke, you are subject to delirious hallucinations. When it first billows out of fissures, it is noxious and irritating, and also very obvious. You can usually stay out of direct contact, but the heavy smoke diffuses throughout the area, taking hours to settle. As long as you breathe here, you can't avoid hallucinating. As you move between the fissures, roll 1d6 to see what kind of hallucination you experience:

I	Dive-bombing bats.	4	Skull advice.
2	Eyeless behemoth.	5	Snake person.
3	Flying weapon.	6	Snake treasure.

If you roll an experience that has already happened, either it happens again, or Snake Eyes shows up instead, GM's choice. Snake Eyes is not a hallucination.

DIVE-BOMBING BATS

Giant bats swoop down upon you from out of the darkness. Even if you try to swat them out of the air, it doesn't work. After a little while, you realize they aren't bats, they are just lengths of tiedtogether fabric, hanging from the ceiling or from tall poles sticking out of the ground and swaying in the wind. These scraps of cloth swirl around, blown hither and yon in the breeze created by the smoke-billowing fissures. Once you return to your senses, you realize you have lost your sense of direction and you are now lost.

EYELESS BEHEMOTH

From out of the billowing smoke steps a giant man, towering over seven feet tall, who wields a massive bronze sword in his hands. He has neither eyes nor tongue. His jet black skin is harder than stone, impervious to weapons, and he rains down blows upon you, as silent as the grave. The only way to defeat him is to knock the sword from his hands (a successful attack or defy danger with the intention of disarming the giant achieves this).

If you defeat him instead, he disappears. If you are killed, you simply fall unconscious, and awaken later, having lost your sense of direction. All wounds caused by the giant were hallucinations.

Either way, you are not entirely alone. Several feet away lies the desiccated body of a giant man. An ancient bronze sword lies next to him, almost entirely consumed by rust. He has been dead for centuries.
FLYING WEAPON

A snake or sword flies toward you, out of the darkness, its tiny batwings flapping comically. It attacks you until you lose your sense of direction and become lost amidst the fissures. None of these weapons are real, and neither is any damage they cause.

SKULL ADVICE

There is a skull lying on the ground, a little ways away. Maybe you see it first, or maybe you hear it, because it talks to you, gives you advice. "You're going the wrong way, you know. There's only death over there. Everyone else who went over there died, you know. Never came back. Maybe you should cast a spell? Oh, you don't know any magic. Maybe you should just kill yourself." Its jaw clatters as it talks. Maybe it laughs at you.

If you pick it up, it's just a skull, centuries old. It doesn't say anything. It can't talk. I mean, it's just an old skull.

SNAKE PERSON

- Who did you abandon, that you probably shouldn't have?
- Who do you miss the most from back home?
- Who do you owe a debt to, that you can never repay?
- Who was kindest to you when you were a child?

Answer whatever question or questions the GM asks you. Then you see this person, stumbling toward you in the darkness, a dazed look on their face. They are trying to speak but seem to be choking. When you get close to them, their pupils turn to slits, their jaw distends, and they turn into a gigantic snake, biting you. After you struggle with this snake for a few moments, getting turned around, sprawling in the dirt, the snake is gone, and so is any damage it caused.

SNAKE TREASURE

You see a piece of treasure on the ground. Someone has dropped it. There it is, just lying there, glittering in the darkness. **If you reach down to touch it,** though, it's not a piece of treasure, it's a snake, and it bites you for 1 damage. Unlike the other hallucinations, this damage is real—you cut your hand on a shard of glass or a thorn bush.

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SNAKE EYES

Infernal, Large, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Flying, Undead.

Snake Eyes has patrolled these lands for countless years. He knows only hunger, but he has no guts to feed, only mouths, and he will never be sated. Even in defeat, the land recreates him.

Instinct: Feast upon the flesh of those who wander in the smoke. **Attacks:**

- Bite with skull mouth (Id10+3 damage, forceful, messy; hand).
- Bite with snake mouths (1d6+1 damage, poisonous; close, near).
- Poke and slash foes with sharp bronze swords (1d8+1 damage; close, near).

Moves:

- Fly off into the smoky darkness.
- Hide within a cloud of smoke.
- Hover just out of reach of foes on the ground.
- Return from death after being killed.
- Skewer a foe and drop them somewhere else.

Tactics:

Snake Eyes flies above his foes, poking and prodding them, looking for weaknesses while he stays out of range of their weapons. If they have ranged weapons, he hides behind the smoke and lets them hallucinate for a while, then comes back to attack them again. If they find a way to get close, he chews them with his giant skull mouth.

Weaknesses:

Snake Eyes is not very smart, even if he is possessed of a low cunning. He just wanders around his proscribed area—the space where his society used to live, before it was destroyed by war and time—haunting it and keeping intruders out.

Perhaps some might wonder why Snake Eyes is preventing anything from being built on his own society's territory, when it is usually the enemy's ground that one razes and salts.

20 HP 2 Armour





By order of the sheriff of Laurenghast

Members of the notorious WOODGHOPPERS are to be detained at the city jail.

A reward of 15 coins is offered for each woodchopper apprehended and delivered to justice.

An additional 100 coins is offered for information leading to the capture of the gang's mysterious leader.

> Licensed bounty hunters are invited to consult the sheriff for further details.

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THE WOODCHOP GANG

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A dour, conservative town at the edge of the woods, Laurenghast has always mouldered in the shadows of larger, more prosperous port cities. It has never been a very urbane and cosmopolitan community. One might even go so far as to call it "sleepy," though anyone with eyes and good judgment should prefer to call it "blackout drunk" or "crippled by apathy," even if politeness prevents them from doing so very loudly.

Of late, however, there is villainy in the streets. A veritable **wave** of crime sweeps over the town. Burglaries and break-ins abound, citizens are robbed—brazenly!—in the streets, and the murder rate has tripled. Everyone knows the town's newest gang is to blame, the ones who like to wave their axes around so much. The city may not want a war on its hands, but the law can't stop the woodchoppers, and the underworld can't seem to, either.

SOMETHING INTERESTING

Most criminals in Laurenghast look down on dwarves and midgets, both literally and figuratively. But the Woodchop gang actively recruits people of smaller stature.

SOMETHING USEFUL

The Woodchoppers operate out of a run-down mansion, up on Ravenwall Hill, amidst the hawthorn trees. They don't take kindly to other gangsters nosing around their neighbourhood, however.

THE SAD STORY OF MORTIMER SPRAAL

Mortimer Spraal became a recluse after making a fortune lending money to several mercantile shipping firms. He reportedly turned to woodcarving and purchased numerous arcane tomes of dubious merit through auctions in the city of Mournhaven and a few shadier channels. He was also known to pester ship captains to bring him obscure woods from all over the world. He used the wood to build puppets, and the spells he found in his tomes to give them life.

There is nothing in the early life of Mortimer Spraal to suggest this was his own idea. He had some dubious connections to the criminal underworld as pawnbroker and moneylender, to be sure, but he was never known for fancies. He told no one what he was doing, nor why. He kept no journal to document his thoughts and deeds. Did he long for a child he could not have? Did he desire magical servants? Were these to be his agents of vengeance? It does not matter. He got what most wizards get: death at the hands of his creations.

His two "successful" experiments—Klaus and Gretel, he named them—have the run of his house now that Mortimer is out of the way. Gretel occasionally poses as him through the use of a simple spell she found in one of his books, but they have other business to attend to. They found that if they used Mortimer's methods to create other golems out of puppets, they would only be animated for a short time. And more importantly, they were nowhere near as intelligent as Klaus and Gretel were. The duo longed for more, but they are not content to be freaks or curiosities in a world of meatcreatures. So they started a gang.

These days, the Woodchop Gang operates out of Mortimer's mansion, now full of drugs, stolen merchandise, and other illegal things. The gang attracts a mixed bag for its members. Some want to learn occult secrets, and relish working for inhuman golems, while others just want to fight other gangs and prove their superiority. And then there are those who would otherwise be at the bottom of the pecking order of Laurenghast's underclasses, except this gang doesn't care how broken a person is, as long as they can be useful.

Many of these people wouldn't be caught dead associating with each other in any other circumstances. But Klaus and Gretel keep their gang together. Some might say they have a certain charismatic aura about them, or an inhuman mystique, but they know the real reason it's worked so far: success. They've got the town's other gangs on the run, and they're taking territory all the time. As long as they keep it up, everything should be fine. Right?



THE CRIMINAL UNDERGROUND 80

GRETEL

16 HP 2 Armour Cautious, Construct, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Small, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Made of animated wood.

Though not as aggressive as Klaus is, Gretel is smarter, which makes her the *de facto* leader of the Woodchop Gang. This responsibility weighs heavily on her, and she always feels guilty about putting her own wants and needs before those of the gang. But those wants and needs are powerful things, indeed, and they do not like coming second.

Instinct: To covet what humans have.

Attacks:

- Bite (Id10 damage; hand).
- Strings (1d6 damage; reach). These can be used as whips or they can grab a foe so Klaus can pull them close or pull them prone.

Moves:

- Cast a simple spell from one of Mortimer's books.
- Command the woodchoppers.
- Make decisions for the Woodchop Gang.
- Perform a magical golem ritual.
- Sense magic.
- Sneak around quietly.

Tactics:

Gretel always looks to weaken her enemies before attacking directly. Chip away at their defensives, chop their allies down, starting with the weak ones. She does not like to take risks unless she has both a back-up plan and an escape route.

Weaknesses:

Because she is made of wood, Gretel is vulnerable to being burned, and she can only heal by magical means. She is also slowly rotting

inside, from some kind of magical infection. This lends her a certain amount of urgency, but she is also very cautious and sometimes prone to indecision. She prefers to leave decisive action to Klaus, but she has panicked before.



KLAUS

16 HP 2 Armour

Construct, Intelligent, Magical, Small, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Made of animated wood.

Klaus is the main enforcer for the gang, leading his human and puppet underlings into savage streetfights with other gangsters. He has no other way to deal with his own self-loathing.

Instinct: To deal out punishment.

Attacks:

- Strings (1d6 damage; reach). These can be used as whips or they can grab a foe so Klaus can pull them closer or pull them prone.
- Wooden fists (1d10 damage; hand).

Moves:

- Sense magic.
- Set the woodchoppers to action.
- Smash and grab.
- Sneak around silently.

Tactics:

Klaus works from the shadows, but only because he has to. The gang has started recruiting small people and sometimes they wear cloaks and wooden masks to make the puppets stand out less. But once the gang has someone cornered, and they aren't worried about being found out, Klaus can reveal himself and really bring the hammer down.

Weaknesses:

Like Gretel, Klaus is vulnerable to being burned, and he can only heal by magical means. His senses are not those of flesh-and-blood creatures, either, though this usually works to his advantage. Klaus can also be a little too decisive at times, and has almost brought down the gang through impulsive action. But with Gretel being so

cautious, he believes he has to take the reigns every so often and make sure things get done when they need to.



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HUMAN WOODCHOPPER

Horde, Intelligent, Organized.

3 HP o Armour

The Woodchop Gang has recruited from several different neighbourhoods around Laurenghast. Already a few rival gangs have disappeared, their members either leaving town or joining the woodchoppers—or their chopped-up bodies being discovered come morning.

Instinct: To take by force.

Attacks:

• Hatchet (1d6 damage; close).

Moves:

- Cause a ruckus.
- Mug a civilian.
- Roll a body.
- Smash and grab.

Tactics:

They usually come up with a plan before an operation—even one as simple as "three men at the front door, the rest in through the back"—but once that plan goes to pot, they mostly just grab someone and beat on them until they get told what to do.

WOODEN WOODCHOPPER

7 HP 1 Armour

Construct, Group, Small, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Made of animated wood.

These puppets are given life in small batches by Gretel, but are only animated for a few weeks or months at a time. The gang uses them in groups but also deploys them singly, where needed. They are not very intelligent, but can act as lookouts, lures, spies, thieves, and poisoners.

Instinct: To obey the gang.

Attacks:

• Poisoned dagger (1d6 damage, poison; hand, close).

Moves:

- Look like a normal puppet.
- Sneak around silently.

Tactics:

Animated puppets are always taught to keep from being seen, so even though they can fight well, if their nature is discovered, or even in immediate danger of being discovered, they always attempt to flee as quickly as possible.

ILLEGAL SITUATIONS

The Woodchop Gang is always looking to expand its operations and increase its hold over the neighbourhoods it controls. How might the PCs get involved in their activities, for good or ill? Some of these ways, perhaps...

ANIMAL FARM

The woodchoppers mistakenly hijacked an illegal shipment of **exotic animals** that was being smuggled into Mournhaven. Now they aren't quite sure what to do with the lot of them, aside from sell them to a wealthy bidder. Or, perhaps... do something else with them? If anyone is hungry for some kind of foreign delicacy, they'd need a good recipe and a fine chef to reach a payout, but if Gretel can find an occultist who needs some bizarre sacrifices to appease whatever demon they kiss up to, she won't say no to cash in exchange.

THE KILLING

Klaus has decided it's time to get rid of a rival. Not coincidentally, he's just discovered that said rival—**Count Orlock**—is a vampire. He must be especially vulnerable to the more wooden members of the gang, no? The Woodchop Gang is in the process of hiring some extra muscle in order to keep their various operations nailed down while they wrestle with the dead man, and they might not be too picky about who they hire on. Is this a chance for a few backs to be stabbed? Or can new bonds of friendship be forged in this fire?

RANSOM DEMANDS

The wealthy **Cromberbach family** has received a disturbing **ransom note**. Their daughter, eager to interview her dashing suitors in private—*without* a chaperone—arranged for herself to be kidnapped, with the intention of splitting the ransom money with the Woodchop Gang. She thought they'd be happy to help her have some fun and bilk her parents for a little extra cash, but no. These puppets are hardened gangsters! So they kidnapped her for real and they intend to get as much ransom money out of the family as possible. How long before they start sending body parts, if they don't get what they want? Not very long at all, it turns out.





THE BLOOD POOL

The cave is lit by phosphorescent green lichen all over the walls and ceiling, growing all over the stalactites. It makes everything seem otherworldly, phantasmagorical. Inside this vast, cavernous space there is a pool of fresh blood—impossibly large—with a stone spire rising out of its centre. You can taste the bite of a coppery aroma in the damp air.

With a rustle of feathers, a figure descends from outside and above your field of vision, even though there are no passageways above you, no way out to the surface. But now he is there, lounging on top of the spire: **Hessarach**, a petty god of refuse and scavengers. He has the head and wings of a gigantic vulture, and no skin covering the other parts of his body. He has brought his golden battleaxe, the symbol that his followers revere.

And why did those followers bring you here? Are you a captive, meant for sacrifice? You will be drowned in the pool of blood, your body consumed by it. Perhaps your ghost will find respite in the "heaven" that Hessarach controls, or perhaps it will be claimed by the necromancers that so often plague these lands. Of course, there is no escaping now.

Have you come, instead, to supplicate yourself? A new initiate, devoted to returning this god to prominence? It will be a long, hard road to walk, but the rewards are plentiful. For Hessarach demands only the sacrifice of detritus and cast-offs. That which has served its purpose and been thrown away is what belongs to him. Artworks ruined by a hand that slipped, old tools no longer of any use, the gristle and cartilage that can neither be food nor glue. The sick and wounded, the old and senile, the filth you recoil from.

But that which is new, which gives succour and brings one to power—these are what is left for his people to claim. The freshest of fruits, the fairest of youths, the choicest pieces of meat from the hunt—the cream of the crop is set aside for the most faithful of Hessarach's followers, those who cast down the gods that rival him and the kings who deny his power.



HESSARACH

18 HP o Armour

Devious, Divine, Hoarder, Intelligent, Planar, Solitary. **Special Qualities:** Flying, Demonic, Immune to mortal weapons.

Hessarach claims to be an ancient deity, once revered but now mostly forgotten. He wants revenge upon those newer gods who have usurped his position. Do his aims perhaps align with those of men and women themselves cast out of their societies? It is no wonder apostates and revolutionaries might flock to his cult.

Instinct: To undermine the gods.

Attacks:

• Battleaxe (1d8+4 damage; close, reach).

Moves:

- Accept sacrifices of refuse and leftovers.
- Command followers to violent action.
- Fly on great wings.
- Move between planes of existence.

Tactics:

Hessarach prefers to convert those he meets rather than fight. If combat goes badly for him, he is not afraid to flee. But he would much rather make offers, and negotiate for trades. He will take what has been scavenged or discarded and give power in exchange. The more something was worth before it was broken and cast away, the more power he gains from it.

Weaknesses:

Though he is a deity of the air, he is still more vulnerable to attacks by air elementals and the effects of sky magic than other creatures are. This is because he is no god at all, but merely a malevolent demon, a false idol who betrays his followers. There might well be disgruntled former worshippers out there, somewhere, plotting their vengeance, always pained by the memories of when they had it good, before their patron turned against them and cast them down.

SERVANTS OF THE VULTURE

There are those who have turned against their people, adopted the symbols of the axe and the vulture, and joined the scavenging god's followers. Hessarach has set them all great tasks, and once they overthrow the current order, where they will reign supreme. Their god will be the true master of heaven, and all others will bow to him.

These servants have various tools at their disposal when it comes to pursuing their agenda. Perhaps the most important one is their god's aid. They bring him scavenged things and what they have looted from the ruins of their enemies, he gains power from these things, and then passes those blessings on.

If you sacrifice goods to Hessarach, they must have been scavenged by you or looted from those you killed yourself. If they were scavenged, roll 1d4. If they were looted, roll 1d6. The higher your roll, the greater your reward. Add +1 for each of the following that is also true:

- These goods were culturally significant.
- These goods were dedicated to another deity.
- These goods were quite valuable, monetarily.

Whether they still are or not is irrelevant, but take -1 to your roll if you value these goods and are reluctant to sacrifice them.

Roll	Reward
0-3	Take +1 forward if you do Hessarach's bidding.
4-5	Gain +1 ongoing against the local authorities (+1 armour, +1 damage, or +1 to rolls when you make a move against them, your choice).
6	You may ignore the next divine spell that affects you.
7+	Bend Bars, Lift Gates is now a basic move for you (or as 6 above if you can already make that move).

If you turn against Hessarach, you lose the benefits of his rewards. Although he poses as a regular deity, his magic is actually of the infernal plane and not divine.

DANGER #I: RISE OF THE VULTURE

When converts to Hessarach set up shop in a town—it could be any town, anywhere—they start slow and small, but gradually they grow into a credible threat. There are things they offer to society, especially because they are dedicated to cleaning things up, and the streets around their shrines and temples are always immaculate.

But they want more than that. They want to run things in this town, and they think they can do a better job than the people in charge right now. Especially these corrupt and venal priests, who worship their greedy, selfish gods. The followers of Hessarach will clean up the government, just as they clean up the streets! As peoples' respect for their altruism grows, so too does their belligerence, and they are not afraid to take their fight to the streets, swinging their battleaxes as they go.

Type: Cult (Ambitious Organization). **Impulse:** To seize power from within.

GRIM PORTENTS

- A small shrine to Hessarach opens in town. Few take notice until they begin collecting garbage and cleaning the streets.
- Servants of the Vulture parade through the streets carrying battleaxes. A few scuffles break out with priests of other gods.
- An exorcist arrives to clear out Hessarach's followers but is killed in a seemingly-unconnected street brawl.
- Hessarach's shrine grows to become a temple. His followers claim it is because of the numerous donations, but no one claims to have donated anything other than trash.
- The town's leading priest is found murdered.
- A coalition of priests try to eject Hessarach's followers from town. Street fights become a regular occurrence.
- Town leaders convert to Hessarach and begin expelling priests who refuse to stop fighting.

Impending Doom: Hessarach becomes the town's official patrons and his followers move into positions of authority.

DANGER #2: THE RULE OF PILLAGE

Once the vulture people have control of the town, they proceed to rule it according to his principles. This does not go well for the town. Hessarach demands his followers take a small portion of the best of everything for themselves, and destroy everything else by sacrificing it to him. Soon enough, art collections and libraries become kindling, harvests are left to rot, guildhouses are emptied of their tools, and even the weakest members of society themselves are sacrificed to this malevolent god.

Type: Unholy Ground (Cursed Place).

Impulse: To destroy what is civilized.

GRIM PORTENTS

- The town's official records are deemed unimportant and removed.
- The houses of poor citizens are looted and ransacked in the name of sacrificing rubbish and unnecessary goods.
- Large portions of the town's harvest are publicly sacrificed to Hessarach in complex ceremonies. Those who do not attend face reprisals later.
- The houses of rich citizens are looted and their goods sacrificed to Hessarach.
- Bands of townspeople, driven mad by hunger, are sent to the countryside to claim food and dedicate wastage to Hessarach.
- In the ensuing chaos, the Servants of the Vulture dismantle and loot as much of the town's infrastructure as possible.
- Guilds and merchants who have not yet left are attacked and their businesses destroyed.

Impending Doom: Once the town is left in ruins, with no resources and its social structures unable to function, Hessarach abandons his followers. Stripped of their power, revenge comes upon them swiftly and savagely.

CAVES OF THE CLAY GOD

The golems are no mere annoyance, to be weeded out like feral dogs, the way so many other monsters are. No, they have hopes and dreams, in spite of their near-inability to think. They have a god they worship—a god that must be built, just as they were.

CAST:

- Clay golems and their god.
- Count Garziban, an isolated and little-known nobleman.
- Gobtooth, goblin captain driven out of the abandoned mine.
- Hocksteen, the alchemist.
- Prince Martias, a royal cousin.
- Tamomir, High King of Men.
- Walda Marcove, matriarch of a great banking house.

DANGER #I: HARD TO BUILD A GOD

The clay golems want nothing more than to build their god. The creative urge that was instilled in them, upon their own creation, must find its own expression in turn. But when their god awakens, will its urges be the same, or far more sinister?

Type: Cursed place or horde.

Impulse: To build their god.

GRIM PORTENTS

- The clay golems drive other monsters out of an abandoned mine, begin building their god there.
- Gobtooth and his crew begin robbing travellers nearby.
- Hocksteen's shop is attacked at night by golems, and valuable substances are stolen.
- Prince Martias goes missing, stolen by golems for his blood.
- The golems slay the prince and use his blood to fuel their god.

Impending Doom: The clay god awakens fully and becomes a divine force.

DANGER #2: HANDS OF CLAY

Once their god is awake, the clay golems can take on the appearance of living creatures. They pass for human even as they infiltrate the kingdoms of men, plotting their complete and total overthrow. Nothing but the total extinction of humanity—to be replaced by clay golems—will suffice.

Type: Ambitious organization.

Impulse: To replace all that is human with all that is golem.

QUESTIONS

- A friend of yours went out to destroy the clay golems and has not been heard from since. Who are they? Should you be looking for them?
- Who is your contact in the Marcove banking house? Are they on good terms with the matriarch, or are they a rebellious malcontent?
- Who were Count Garziban's companions when you knew him? Are you surprised to see none of them with him now?

GRIM PORTENTS

- The House of Marcove closes its doors to outsiders, and all its bankers begin wearing masks when undertaking business.
- Wandering demagogues (clay golems in disguise) preach xenophobic rhetoric to growing crowds.
- Count Garziban defeats a great danger to the Kingdoms of Men and is promoted to Tamomir's side.
- An assassin attacks the high king and mortally wounds him.
- The high king is tended by a mysterious healer and miraculously recovers—because he has been replaced by a clay golem doppelgänger!

Impending Doom: Human society is destroyed and what is left of humanity scatters to the winds. The clay people still resemble humans on the surface, but they drive all real humans from their kingdoms.

CLAY GOLEM

9 HP 1 Armour

Amorphous, Construct, Group, Hoarder, Magical, Organized. Special Qualities: Animated clay.

Clay golems mainly look for sources of magical clay that they can build their god out of. But they can also sniff out other magical ingredients that can provide that magic spark. They have no qualms about stealing from humans to get what they need. Despite their lack of intelligence, the know enough to attack at night, and to flee from humans during the day.

Instinct: To collect building materials.

Attacks:

- Grab and smother a foe (1d8 damage, ignores armour; close).
- Throw rocks (1d6 damage; reach, near).

Moves:

- Evaluate the qualities of earth and rock.
- Retreat and regroup with more golems.
- Sense magical energies.

Additional move gained after the god awakens:

• Mimic the appearance of a living creature.

Tactics:

- If they are few: Encircle them and push them together, so they cannot escape being enveloped and suffocated.
- *If they are too strong:* Salvage what materials can be carried and flee to find another mine where the god can be built.
- If they invade the mines where the god is being built: Fight them desperately and drive them out, using environmental features and hazards to get the better of them.

If they possess useful magic: Attack them at night and take their stuff. Weaknesses:

Since clay golems are just that—animated masses of clay and dirt they are vulnerable to flowing water and anything that destroys the enchantment that gives them life. They are also not particularly stealthy, and can be tracked quite easily by anyone who knows what to look for (clay marks and pieces).





CHASING THE DRAGON

This cult of red-robed dragon-worshippers has existed for centuries, its reach stretching, in the best of years, from Thieves' Port to Andelida, from Mournhaven to the South Seas. But those days are gone, and today's cult is not the same as yesteryear's. Instead of spreading out, the cult has gathered together, united under a charismatic leader. For years its membership dwindled—persecuted by the authorities, attacked by the criminal underground, the cult had little to offer new recruits.

But things changed after **Qasim Abbariyyid** returned from his exile in the deserts of Korakoss. The death of the cult's previous leader allowed him his re-entry, just as it started a fresh struggle for power within the ranks. Qasim put an end to that quickly, though, meeting with each of his rivals and turning them into acolytes. For he brought back new insights, new magic, and a new vision.

In Qasim's mind, **the cult needed a dragon**, a real one they could worship and emulate, as well as study. A real dragon they could unleash upon their foes. Not only did he unite his own cult behind his leadership, he also convinced their long-standing rivals, **the green-robed dragon mages**, to join him. **A third dragon cult** even travelled *en masse* from its home across the middle sea because of the strength of his vision and his convictions.

No longer do they waste breath inventing derogatory nicknames for each other. No longer do they squander their resources feuding. Now there is only the quest for **the dragon that lies beneath Skull Mountain!** Of course, this quest is not without its dangers. Skull Mountain is infested with monsters, and none of them care much for the dragon cultists. The **crime syndicate** wants their money, the **death worshippers** want their lives, and the **chaos wizards** long to corrupt their minds. But Qasim will not be deterred. He has successfully staked a claim to a section of the mountain's caves, and leads his loyal fellows on regular forays into the monster-haunted darkness in search of the dragon they know is there.

WYRMS OF THE CRIMSON

Once the future looked bleak for the red-robed cultists, but now they revel in their high status. They owe their pride of place to Qasim and will do anything to support his dream.

RED-ROBED DRAGON CULTIST

6 HP o Armour

Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized.

The majority of dragon cultists wear the crimson.

Instinct: To serve Qasim.

Attacks:

• Short sword (1d6 damage; close).

Moves:

• Cast a dragon-related spell.

The red cultists have a couple of useful spells:

Fountain of Quicksilver

The red cult's most formidable breath weapon spell creates a stream of silver fire that splashes all over the target and anyone nearby, inflicting 2d6 damage and ignoring armour.

LEVEL 3

Spiral of Obscuring Heat LEVEL 3 ONGOING

The air swirls and heats up, but this mirage does not create the illusion of water in the desert. Instead it makes all who stand on the caster's side invisible. Only the heat can give them away. While this spell is ongoing you take -1 to cast a spell.

And a couple of useful items:

GAUNTLETS OF GHOST RENDING

These iron gauntlets allow you to not only touch ghosts and intangible spirits, but also to tear pieces of them away and make off with them. Qasim no longer wears these himself, instead trusting them to various lieutenants when necessary.

THE SPIRIT BOWL

When you put pieces of a corpse, ghost, or spirit in the bowl along with water, roll+INT. On a 7+, the ghost or spirit is reformed and made whole in the bowl's presence. Additionally, on a 10+, the ghost or spirit is temporarily in your power (otherwise, it is not).

DASIM ABBARIYYID

12 HP 2 Armour Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Solitary, Stealthy. Special Qualities: Cult leader, Dragon wizard.

Qasim has not been completely honest with his fellow cultists. His goal is not to find a dragon and worship it—his goal is actually to become the dragon! He has pursued this goal for many years, and achieved partial success. His body is serpentine, covered in scales, horns have sprouted from his head, and his arms have atrophied. But this is not enough. He must complete the change.

Instinct: To pursue self-transformation.

Attacks:

- Breathe fire (1d10 damage, ignores armour, messy; reach).
- Gore a foe with his horns (1d8 damage; close).

Moves:

- Command the dragon cultists.
- Move unseen via Spiral of Obscuring Heat.
- Slither like a snake.



Once Qasim makes contact

with the dragon, there are still a number of steps to complete.

Firstly, he needs to appease the dragon and win its trust. To do this, he must:

- Bring the dragon a source of magical energies.
- Bring the dragon a suitable sacrifice of flesh.
- Bring the dragon a suitable sacrifice of treasure. •

Secondly, he will discover that he does not quite have the required arcane expertise to effect the transformation and take the dragon's place. He still needs:

- Chains of arcane power, with which to bind the dragon's heart.
- The great, unnamed tome of alchemical philosophy written by Magus Margomus.
- A weapon of great power with which to slay the dragon. •

Where will Qasim find these? Perhaps your players know already.

WYRMS OF EMERALD

Before Qasim, the green-robed cultists had far greater power than their red-robed rivals, partly because of their use of dragon dogs. Their leader also carries the sword Stonebiter.

EMERALD-ROBED DRAGON CULTIST

8 HP 1 Armour

Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized. Special Qualities: Dog and wizard team.

Those wearing green are the most warlike of dragon worshippers. They were not always loyal to Qasim, but he has won them over with his charisma. **Instinct:** To find a dragon to worship. **Attacks:**

• Sword (1d8 damage; close).

Moves:

- Call for dragon cult reinforcements.
- Cast a draconic spell.
- Charge heedlessly into danger.
- Deploy the clockwork lizard.
- Make bold or preposterous threats, with the intention of actually carrying them out.

THE CLOCKWORK LIZARD

This lizard-shaped automaton, about the size of a dog, can be made to walk around on its own, once it is wound up. The true magic of the clockwork lizard is that it deflects spells and defeats magical effects in its presence. Should it walk through a spell effect, the effect is cancelled. It cannot be harmed by magic, but it cannot stop effects caused by magic that are not themselves made of magic.

STONEBITER

This magic sword cuts through stone and metal easily (+2 piercing). You can also slash the earth with it and spray debris into the face of your foe. **If you do this,** roll+DEX. **On a 7+,** they are stunned for a moment and completely vulnerable to a follow-up attack or maneuver, but **on a 7-9,** they are not slowed down, and complete whatever action they had initiated. They might even continue forward, enraged and blinded.



DRAGON DOG

6 HP 2 Armour

Group.

Special Qualities: Hybrid of mammal and reptile, Immune to fire.

A dragon dog has the rough shape of a dog, but is covered in greenish scales and its mouth drips with acid. They were created by a coven of unscrupulous alchemists in the back streets of Laurenghast before being exported to cult headquarters in the south.

Employing their own special magic to control them, the greenrobed cultists use these vicious creatures much as they would use attack dogs.

Instinct: To savage the dragon cult's enemies.

Attacks:

• Bite (b[2d8+2] damage, 1 piercing, acidic, forceful, messy; close). Moves:

- Bark and howl furiously.
- Track by scent.
- Vomit acid.

Tactics:

Dragon dogs are savage, feral creatures. Only the green-robed dragon cultists can control them. Otherwise, they run wild.

Weaknesses:

Though they have no problem with heat, dragon dogs hate the cold and turn tail in the face of frost-based magical attacks.

WYRMS OF THE PURPLE

Coming from a foreign tradition, the Southern cultists, robed in purple by tradition, have brought a host of new magical techniques to the cult, all the better to complete their glorious purpose.

PURPLE-ROBED DRAGON CULTIST

6 HP o Armour

Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized. Special Qualities: Weirdo sorcerer.

They followed arcane visions from across the sea, which brought them to Qasim. Now they have their prophet, all they need now is find their god. Instinct: To help Qasim find a dragon. Attacks:

- Curved dagger (1d6 damage; close).
- Dragon breath spell (IdIo damage, magical, messy; near).

Moves:

- Cast a weird spell.
- Decipher ancient occult tomes.
- Reach through solid materials to what lies beyond.
- See through the aether to destiny.

Burning Sands

A location of your choice is covered in a thin layer of sand so hot it burns the feet of any who dare to cross it. The sand disappears as it cools.

Clay Swarm

A swarm of locusts, all made of clay, erupts from your hand and violently collides with your target. They clay of their bodies splatters and hardens, encasing them in clay and holding them immobilized until they break free or someone digs them out.

Entanglement of Souls

When you cast this spell on someone, your fate becomes linked with theirs. Without even noticing, you will find yourself continually running into them, by accident. Wherever they go, you show up. The purple cultists use this spell to spy on their enemies. It lasts for a year and a day.



LEVEL 1

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 3

DRACONIAN GRUDGES

Even though they have increased their power by banding together, the dragon cultists are still minor players in the power struggles beneath Skull Mountain. Perhaps a dragon would change this, and upset the status quo in their favour?

THE CASINO SYNDICATE

The suckering worms have little knowledge of the dragon cult, and even less experience interacting with them. They are not wealthy enough to enter the casino, and have never tried to rob it or its customers, and so these two factions are content to stay out of the other's way—for now.

CHAOS CULTISTS & THE SHROOM GANG

Because they have a few interests in common—being interested in sorcery, transformation, and magical beasts—the dragon cultists are not eager to come to blows with either the chaos cultists or the Shroom Gang. Because of their revulsion at the mutations and madness caused by the worship of pure chance, however, the dragon cult is also not eager to interact with the chaos cultists, either. They prefer to keep a respectful distance.

Most dragon cultists believe the Shroom Gang is part of the chaos cult. Who wouldn't? Just look at them—that's *exactly* what chaos looks like, isn't it?

DEATH CULTISTS

The main enemy of the dragon cult is the death cult. Yes, there are other threats, but the one most abominable is those who make slaves of the undead. The dragon cult offers a bounty on slain death cultists: 25 coins per head. They only offer this to those they think are trustworthy and discreet, however, as Qasim doesn't want this offer getting around.

THE EYEBALL SYNDICATE

Another threat to the dragon cult is Zebbagrulom's appetite for wizard-flesh. They have no interest in ordinary criminal schemes, and since Qasim forbids drug addiction within the cult, it has little use for underworld vice purveyors. Because the dragon cultists are not a source of income for Zebbagrulom, he has no qualms about eating any of them, and has done so before. For this, the cult wants him dead.

THE VAULT HEIST

In the endless caves that snake beneath Skull Mountain, a secret war is being waged. The death cultists push inexorably on with their plan to destroy all other philosophies, and feed those who hold divergent ideas into the ravenous maws of their evil gods. From the perspective of the dragon worshippers, they appear to be winning this war.

But all is not yet lost. Indeed, the death cultists have numerous resources at their disposal, and one of the most important is their wealth. For humans are not the only creatures that lust after gold and shiny jewels—there are plenty of monsters whose aid can also be bought with such lucre. And of one must hoard wealth, one must hoard it somewhere, and the location of **the death cult's vault** full of valuables is a secret that has not been able to escape the cult of the dragon.

Suella the Snake, a petty thief not well-liked in the human underworld because of her reptilian features, has friends amongst those who revere the dragon, and the plan to raid the death cult's vault is her brainchild. **Rafa Serpesso** of the green robes, being the closest to her—and also a trainer of the cult's most fearsome weapon, the dragon dog—has been given command of the heist.

Day and night they toil, digging through the earth. But soon they will have tunnelled into the back of the vault, bypassing the hordes of undead creatures and cult necromancers that guard its entrance. They have **guards** to keep outsiders away until they can make off with the loot, but if they do not work fast enough, someone will discover them—someone whose silence cannot be bought with death—and the plan will be ruined.

But the dragon cultists know what is at stake here. If the death cult is allowed to grow and flourish, every other cultist in the land, whether they worship dragons or not, will be forced to surrender to death. But if they can strike this blow against their hated rivals, it could be their own cult that triumphs in the end.

SUELLA THE SNAKE

12 HP 2 Armour Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized, Solitary, Stealthy, Terrifying. Special Qualities: Extremely flexible, Snake person.

An old hand at the big city's underworld rackets, Suella has always had to steal to survive. After all, when you look like a snake person, you can't just get a job. Of course, working for a crime syndicate and having a job are basically the same thing, which is why Suella has planned this heist—she'd rather work with a bunch of reptileworshipping cultist than a bunch of gangsters.

Instinct: To take what belongs to others.

Attacks:

- Poisoned dagger (1d8 damage, 1 piercing; close).
- Radiant eyes (1d6 damage, blinding, ignores armour; near).

Moves:

- Call on the dragon cult for aid.
- Hide in shadows.
- Plan a heist.
- Shed skin like a snake.
- Steal something valuable.

Tactics:

If they are afraid: Scare them into running away.

If they are strong: Ambush them and strike from the shadows.

If they are stupid: Talk them into giving up their valuables.

Weaknesses:

Suella wears a wig so she appears mostly normal in the dark or from afar, but there is no hiding her bizarre reptilian appearance up close—or the radiant discs she has instead of eyes. She is shunned by all civilized folk except those who consider her a curiosity worthy of providing some entertainment. Only monsters and weird cultists have ever treated her like a person.

"Society doesn't want people like me around. Until we have money, that is! Well, I'm going to have quite a bit, real soon..."



RAFA SERPESSO

12 HP 1 Armour

Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Solitary, Stealthy. **Special Qualities:** Dragon cultist, Dragon dog trainer.

All he ever wanted was dragons. To ride one, to own one, to be one—he doesn't know and it probably doesn't matter. He was a gladiator and a slave soldier before he was bought by a dragon cultist and taught their ways. He is a natural leader of both men and dragon dogs, and lately it seems to him that the unified dragon cult has not gone far enough. Sometimes he wonders if maybe he's getting too ambitious to stay with them...

Instinct: To pursue the dragon.

Attacks:

- Sword (1d10 damage; close).
- Magical blast (1d6 damage, 1 piercing; near).

Moves:

- Infiltrate by stealth.
- Lead the dragon cultists into action.
- Summon a corrosive elemental spirit.
- Unleash the dragon dogs.

Tactics:

When action must be taken: Strike as quickly as possible and retreat as soon as the advantage is gone, then repeat.

When stealth is needed: Keep everyone quiet, especially the dragon dogs.

When there is grumbling in the ranks: Make an example of someone.

Weaknesses:

Beneath his tough-guy exterior, Rafa is both a dreamer and loyal to a fault. He would never give up on his quest to become one with the dragon, but he would also never betray a true comrade. And these two sides of his personality have been struggling against each other of late.

"You can dig the tunnel, or I can feed you to the dogs. Now pick up that shovel!"



TREASURE HAUL

The cavern where the death cult keeps its vault is constantly patrolled by dozens of necromancers, skeletons, and zombies. There is a dome-like cave where blasphemous rituals are conducted, and a charnel pit where bodies and garbage are dumped, that occasionally spawns undead horrors.

There are only two ways in or out, and the death cult is extremely vigilant. There is almost no way to sneak in—certainly no way without the aid of magic, as the undead can smell the living.

The **outer vault** is where four giant statues of the death gods are displayed and attended at all times by necromancers and their blind slaves. Beyond them lies the massive iron door that leads to the **inner vault**, where treasures almost beyond imagining reside.

This inner vault is also full of zombies, standing motionless awaiting order or intruders. They do not raise the alarm if attacked by people tunnelling through the wall, but the loud noise of combat might...

The inner vault contains the following treasures:

- 1d6 bottles of poison.
- 2d20 battle axes, 1d20 bows and 2d100 arrows, 3d6 daggers, 1d10 halberds, 3d6 maces, 2d6 shields, 1d100 spears, and 2d20 swords.
- 3d20 small, gilded statues of various death gods, each worth 100 coins.
- 4 large chests sitting on the ground, each weighing 100 pounds and containing 5,000 gold coins.
- 4d6+100 small gems, worth 100 coins each, in 2d6 bags inside a mahogany box, sitting on a table.
- 5 large ivory tusks, carved with images of death gods, worth 500 coins each.
- 6 thumb-sized rubies, worth 500 coins each, lying out on a table.

The dragon cultists could make good use of these riches, funding their quest to find a proper dragon to worship. What dragon passes up a hoard of treasure to sleep on?

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THE END.