

SHOTGUNS AND SORCERY™

MONSTERS & MEAN STREETS

 CYPHER™
SYSTEM

DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS ELVES, ORCS, AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN WHO LIVES IN DRAGON CITY MUST GO

As a people, the residents of Dragon City are bound together mostly by fear. Whether that fear springs from the undead creatures who claw at the Great Circle, or from the iron claw of the Dragon Emperor, or from any of the dozens of horrific monsters that plague Dragon City inside and out, it matters little. They know fear better than they know themselves.

This sourcebook for *Shotguns & Sorcery: The Roleplaying Game* contains dozens of new creatures and NPC archetypes to inspire fear in your heroes—and maybe their players too. It also includes random encounter tables and guidelines for how to create your own creatures for your game. No *Shotguns & Sorcery* Game Master should haunt the streets of Dragon City without it.



SHOTGUNS AND SORCERY™

MONSTERS AND MEAN STREETS

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CHAPTER 1: DESIGNING CREATURES

The world of *Shotguns & Sorcery* is full of so many monsters that it's hard to keep track of them all. Most people don't want to. Many folks would prefer for the things that live in the dark to stay in the dark.

Dragon City serves a shelter from a lot of the threats of the world outside—though it is not nearly as effective or impervious a protection as it may sometimes seem. A good number of the most dangerous things in the world are born inside the Great Circle, where the wall encircling the city does nothing to stop them.

This is a catalog of the world's more esoteric creatures. Some good, some bad, most poorly understood. The beings held in these pages range in size from fungal parasites to giants. Some are dumb as a sack of bricks, while others are intelligent enough to form societies. They've always been here in the world of Dragon City, just out of view, out on the periphery of things.

But here they are now, ready for use in your game, laid out with their stats and information, as much as there is to gather. This book serves as a guide to the weirder parts of the *Shotguns & Sorcery* world. It's a manual for finding new adventures and for making your own, with the craziest elements this world contains.

In a general sense, it's a guide for shaking things up. And in a world that's ever changing, there are few things more valuable.

USING THIS Book

This book is meant for the eyes of the *Shotguns & Sorcery* Game Master only. If you're a player who intends to never sit behind a Game Master's screen and run an adventure, you should stop reading right now, if only to avoid spoilers. Half the fun in encountering strange new creatures comes in the surprises they can offer, and if you ruin that for yourself, you don't have anyone else to blame.

If you're simply a fan of the *Shotguns & Sorcery* stories and want to know more about the odder corners of the world, you can feel free to browse through these pages. Keep in mind that not all of these creatures have made their way into a published *Shotguns & Sorcery* story. That doesn't mean that they couldn't do just that at some point in the future though.

The first part of this book talks about the philosophy behind designing and using monsters in *Shotguns & Sorcery*. The second chapter features dozens of fresh monsters for your game. The third and final part gives a bit more depth on the major types of fantasy races in the game and how they interact in Dragon City.

You don't have to read this book all at once or straight from cover to cover. Just enjoy it however you like.

DESIGNING MONSTERS FOR SHOTGUNS & SORCERY

Designing creatures for *Shotguns & Sorcery* is meant to be easy, and it follows the simple strategy used in all Cypher System games. At its most basic, a creature—like any NPC—is represented by a single number that indicates its level. That number tells you all you really need to know, and then you can simply layer in the description as you like.

You could, for instance, describe to your players a disgusting undead monstrosity with eight long spindly arms, a mouth with fangs like a saber-tooth tiger, and some kind of viscous blood jelly covering its rotting flesh, but all you really need to write down about it in your notes is “Level 5.”

All you as the Game Master really need to know is that creatures can work however you want them to. After all, it’s your game, and you get to play it in any way you like. But if you would like more details, suggestions, guidelines, and food for thought, this chapter can help.

CREATURES VS. CHARACTERS

Creatures don’t follow the same rules that player characters do. They don’t have stat Pools, don’t use Effort, and aren’t as limited in what they can do in an action because their form, size, and nature can vary so wildly.

That offers you, as the Game Master, an incredible amount of freedom to create monsters that work in any way you like. However, there are some common elements you should consider as you ponder the monsters, whether the official ones in this book or the core rulebook or ones that you create from whole cloth yourself.

LEVEL

A creature’s level—expressed as a single number—is a measure of its power, defense, intelligence, speed, and ability to interact with the world around it. Generally, it’s an indicator of toughness in combat, although it’s certainly possible to have a lower-level creature be a tougher opponent than a slightly higher one, particularly in certain circumstances.

Level isn’t an abstract tool used to match NPCs to PCs for appropriate encounters. Encounters have too many variables in them—including the nature of the player characters involved in your game—to fit neatly into such equations.

Instead, a level’s number represents an overall rating of a creature to show how it fits into the context of the world. There is no rule that says a certain ability should be given only to a creature of a certain level, and there is no rule dictating how many abilities a creature of a given level should have.

Still, the numbers matter. Keep the spirit of the system in mind. Lower-level creatures are less dangerous. Higher-level monsters are more dangerous.

Because of this, a creature’s level is its most important feature. For some creatures, it is the only feature. If you know the level for such simple beasts, you have everything you need encapsulated right there.

Level determines how hard a creature is to hit, how hard it is to dodge or resist, how much damage it does, and how much health it has—typically, three times its level. It tells you how hard the creature is to interact with, fool, or intimidate, and how well it can run, climb, and so on. Level even tells you how fast it acts in terms of initiative.

Of course, you’re free to modify any of the details as best fits the creature, either for what you want it to do in an encounter or—even better—to try to ensure that it makes sense in the context of the greater world of *Shotguns & Sorcery* as you understand it. A really big creature, for example, should have more health but be easier to hit in combat.

In general, level is the default stat for a creature, with pretty much everything else being an exception. In other words, you can derive what you need from the level, but all the exceptions you make to that guideline are what make creatures unique and interesting.

To determine a level, figure out an appropriate rating (on a scale of 1 to 10) for the creature for most things. Don’t base its level on the one thing it does best because you can portray that as a modification. Its level is the baseline.

If you’re not sure what a creature’s level should be, try comparing it to other creatures in this book and in the *Shotguns & Sorcery* core rulebook. You can consult the list of creatures by level at the end of this chapter for an excellent overview.

HEALTH

Since creatures don’t have stat Pools like characters do, you have to figure out how much damage they can take, and that number is what we call a creature’s health. Health should generally correspond with the creature’s size. Really big creatures should have lots of health, and tiny ones should have very little.

You can fudge the numbers a bit to fit your image of the creature. For instance, you can give a creature that’s really good in combat more health than its physicality might suggest. This helps represent the fact that it’s no pushover and not easily defeated. Conversely, you can give a strong-looking creature less health to show that it’s not quite as powerful as it might like to pretend.

Although there are several variables, it’s safe to think—as a guideline—that a group of four low-tier PCs (say, of first or second tier) is likely to dish out about 10 points of damage in a round. This figure assumes there are four characters with a healthy mix of weaponry and attacks. In general, if all of their attacks hit, they would deal around 20 points of damage.

However, we should assume that they hit their target with a bit better than 50 percent accuracy if they are fighting a level 3 or 4 foe and using Effort. This ballpark estimate tells you that on average the party can wipe out a creature with a health of 11 or less in a single round. (Armor figures hugely into this, but we’ll get to that in a bit.) A creature with a health of 12 to 22 should last for two rounds. A creature with a health of 23 to 33 should last three. And so on.

Of course, all that assumes the heroes are attacking a single creature rather than a group of them. And that the creature doesn’t have special defenses of any kind. As with most things, you should be careful of making too many generalizations with something so complex. But it’s a good yardstick to work with at least.

For PCs who are third or fourth tier, you can add about 6 points to the average damage figure, based on using Effort to increase damage. At fifth and sixth tiers, you can figure that the PCs can deal about 20 to 25 points of damage each round, which is a whole lot of whooping.

Again, these are rough estimates based on averages. They don't figure in high dice rolls, using lots of Effort, employing cyphers, activating artifacts, or the effects of GM intrusions. These calculations are useful as a rule of thumb to determine how hard or easy you want a fight to be.

Similarly, the length of a fight can indicate how hard it's going to be for the heroes. A single-round fight is kind of a pushover for any party of adventurers. A fight that lasts two to four rounds is more interesting. Going five or six rounds makes for a much tougher fight.

Combat encounters that go on longer than that can start to drag unless the creature is really interesting or the encounter offers something unique. For example, it occurs on a precipice over a river of toxic sludge, or the PCs have to protect a sickly NPC while dealing with their foes. In other words, creature health is the knob to adjust when determining how long you want a combat encounter to last.

Also, most creatures don't just stand there soaking up damage while the heroes beat on them. The monsters deal out damage of their own. The longer the fight goes on, the worse it's probably going to wind up for the heroes who must suffer through it. Unlike most monsters, they have more parts of their story yet to tell beyond this single encounter.

DAMAGE

It's important to remember that damage—the amount a creature deals out—is based on the creature's level, not other factors. So a level 6 creature that fires a medium handgun inflicts 6 points of damage, not 4 points. This reflects the fact that more competent creatures can inflict worse injuries with the same weapons. You can adjust the damage to fit the creature's attack—or your overall vision of the creature and how effective it is—but the level should always be the baseline.

A massive, strong creature could deal more damage than its level might suggest, and a creature with especially large claws or a powerful bite might do so as well. A particularly skillful combatant should deal more damage too.

Only rarely should a creature deal less damage than its level. When that happens, you should have a good reason for setting things to work that way.

Remember that the heroes often wind up wearing Armor of some sort for their own protection, so it's difficult (but not impossible) for creatures that deal only 1 or 2 points of damage to challenge the characters.

You can compare the determinations you made about the creature's health to figure out how much damage it can deal to the PCs in an encounter. Again, if you figure 50 percent accuracy, the creature should deal its damage every other round. So if a creature has enough health to last three rounds, on average, it likely deals its damage twice.

Creatures that make more than one attack on their turn potentially deal their damage with each attack, which can greatly affect damage output.

ARMOR

Armor doesn't depend on a creature's level. The default amount of Armor a creature has is zero.

As a statistic, Armor represents anything that offers a creature physical protection from damage. That can include a suit of physical armor, thick skin, metal plating, scales, a carapace, mental wards, or any other type of similar defensive equipment or power.

Armor does not represent other things that might make a creature hard to damage, such as intangibility. That's represented in the rules in other ways.

Armor greatly influences how long a creature can last in a combat encounter. The higher the Armor, the longer the creature tends to be able to survive.

The Armor rating reduces the amount of damage the creature suffers each round. So take four characters, and let's say they inflict 4, 5, 4, and 7 points of damage each round. Give their foe 3 points of Armor, and now they only inflict 1, 2, 1, and 4 points of damage instead. On an average round, they only inflict a total of 4 points of damage, and a creature with 11 health should last for three rounds instead of one.

Of course, against such a foe, smart PCs use Effort to increase their damage and overcome the Armor, at least temporarily. This is especially useful if a creature has more Armor than the heroes can inflict damage. For instance, if that same foe had 5 points of Armor, only the biggest hitter would be able to do any damage at all, and then only 2 points.

Don't give every creature Armor though. If everything has 2 points of Armor, then all attacks just deal 2 fewer points of damage, and that doesn't offer any variations for your battles. Sometimes a creature with lots of health and no Armor can be an interesting encounter too.

You can even change things up among similar creatures in an encounter. In a group of gang members in Goblintown, for instance, you could have two orcs with Armor 1, one with Armor 2, and another without any at all.

MOVEMENT

Other than Armor, the only thing that level doesn't tell you is how fast a creature moves. However, unless there's a really good reason to do otherwise, just assume that any creature can move a short distance as an action.

Typically, flying creatures can move a long distance in the air in a single action and a short distance (or less) on the ground. Many creatures that can fly aren't particularly noted for their gracefulness when grounded.

Swimming creatures can generally move a short distance in the water and a similar distance on the ground—if they have legs, which often isn't the case. Swimming creatures generally stick to the water for that exact reason.

Creatures that can move a long distance as an action are usually large beings with long legs and a big stride. Small creatures can be very quick—just look for any halfling darting around the Main Square—but that doesn't always mean they can actually move a long distance in a single round. It's one thing to be quick-handed and another entirely to be fleet of foot.

MODIFICATIONS

Health, damage, and almost everything else in a creature's entry can include exceptions to the default assumptions based on the creature's level. Modifications are a catch-all for these exceptions. Basically, these are things the creature can manage at something other than its normal level.

A level 2 tree-dwelling beast might be level 4 when it comes to climbing, for instance. Similarly, a level 3 creature with a heightened sense of smell and good hearing is probably level 4 or 5 when it comes to perception. In the same way, tiny, quiet creatures are usually a level or two higher at stealth than your average beasts.

Not all modifications are in the creature's favor. If you make a huge creature that is little more than a beast, you might want to lower its level for things like resisting trickery or traps. A big, lumbering brute would likely be worse at stealth than its level would suggest. A stupid creature might be terrible at perception. Modifications that alter a creature in negative ways are just as interesting as those that change them in more positive manners.

Don't bother considering modifications in too much detail. Only think about things that are likely to come up at the table. Figuring out how good a creature is at carpet weaving or how much it knows about identifying various kinds of trees probably isn't worth the effort to think about—unless those elements could play directly into your encounter.

If something like that does come up out of the blue, you can often concoct the required alterations on the fly. Just apply a little imagination to come up with the answers you require for any given situation, no matter how unusual it might be.

COMBAT

Combat is simply where you can note what the creature does in a fight, how it reacts to combat, and—most importantly—any special combat-related abilities it might have. There are no hard-and-fast rules here. In fact, it's very much the opposite.

This is the place where you note how the creature makes its own rules. Multiple attacks in a single action? Fine. Poison? Good for it. Mental powers? Interesting.

If you're designing a creature for your own use, just make simple notes for how you want a combat encounter to play out so that the creature fits the role you want it to have in your grand scheme. Use (or create) the mechanics to replicate what you want the creature to do, not the other way around.

MOTIVE, ENVIRONMENT, INTERACTION, USE & LOOT

Monsters & Mean Streets provides these entries for creatures, but for a GM's home-brewed creature, you probably won't find them necessary. After all, you made the creature, so you know how to use it and where it's found, and you likely have a good idea of how the PCs can interact with it.

If you want to add such things for the sake of completeness, go right ahead. Just know that there's a good chance you're the only person who's ever going to worry about it.

MAKING CREATURES EVEN MORE DANGEROUS

Although a high-level creature is already pretty dangerous, there are a few things you can do to turn any creature into a threat to the heroes. That's assuming this is something you want to do. Not every encounter should carry a risk of instant death for everyone in the group.

THE DAMAGE TRACK

First and foremost, moving PCs down the damage track rather than (or in addition to) dealing damage is a sure way to put fear into the heart of a player. It doesn't matter how many points you have in your Pools or what abilities you have. It's still just three steps to death on the damage track.

OTHER KINDS OF DAMAGE

Attacks that do more than just deal damage make it clear that a player should spend points from their Pool to avoid them. If an attack deals 3 points of damage, does it make sense to spend 3 points to use a level of Effort to avoid it? Maybe.

In some situations, losing points from your Speed Pool might be better than losing them from your Might Pool. But spending points to avoid moving a step down the damage track? That makes more sense.

Spending Intellect points to avoid being mind-controlled? Again, very fitting.

IGNORING ARMOR

Any attack that ignores the heroes' primary defense mechanism is scary. Assaults they could laugh off before instantly become lethal threats.

EXTRA ATTACKS

Creatures that can attack all the heroes at once—whether with multiple arms or a radius or aura effect—can be very challenging. Sometimes a group's tactics rely on one or two characters going toe to toe with the enemy while the others hang back. Those PCs in the back might not be prepared for an attack that affects them as well.

LONGER THAN LONG-RANGE ATTACKS

Most PCs have limited options at long range, but what if the creature can attack them from a quarter mile away with mental blasts or magical missiles? Now they have an entirely different kind of encounter to deal with, one that's going to give them fits until they solve it.

FITTING THE CREATURES INTO THE SETTING

The ideas behind a creature are just as important as its combat stats. In fact, they're often even more important. How does it fit into the world? What role will it play in your story? What's right and what's wrong for a setting like *Shotguns & Sorcery*?

The important thing to keep in mind is to maintain the flavor of the world. Creatures in Dragon City and its environs are magic, but they often feature a dark twist on the standard fantasy version.

Creatures that live inside Dragon City have often adapted to its accelerated technology, which is far ahead of that found in a classic high-fantasy world. Monsters that live beneath the city have figured out a way to leech off the place without making themselves overtly known. Those beasts that reside beyond the Great Circle have been running wild for centuries, with nothing to keep them in check but other monsters or the servants of the Ruler of the Dead.

When you make these flavor choices, they should be overt and obvious, not a hidden facet of the creature's backstory that the players couldn't possibly ever discover. If it's not something that's out there in the open, the heroes might never learn about it.

Because of this, less is more when it comes to creatures. Don't worry about its origins in the distant past. Concern yourself with how it fits into the world now.

What's it doing? Why is it trying to tear out a character's throat? That's what the heroes need to know.

GM INTRUSIONS

Although it's often best to come up with GM intrusions on the fly, based on the current needs of the story, it's not a terrible idea to have one or two up your sleeve. Each creature entry in this book has at least one GM intrusion listed as an example and a reference.

It can be tempting to use GM intrusions that result in more damage or have other straightforward effects. Often, however, you get more mileage out of them if they are story based. For example, a huge creature starts to swallow the PC whole, or a lumbering beast stumbles and falls on the character. This is stuff that really changes the encounter and leads to a wild story that everyone will remember afterward. The best kind of GM intrusion is one where the GM describes what happens and then says, "Now what do you do?"

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Those are all the main sections in a creature's stat entry, but there are other things to think about.

CREATURE SIZE

Consider a creature's size carefully. For those that are quick and hard to hit, increase the difficulty to attack them by one step.

Conversely, large and slow creatures should be easier to hit, so decrease the difficulty to attack them by one step.

MULTIPLE ATTACKS

No matter how big and tough it is, a single creature should have a hard time holding its own against a group of heroes who can effectively gang up on it. Giving a creature multiple attacks as a single action—so that it can attack some or all of the characters at once—goes a long way toward making it a suitable foe for a group of opponents.

However, creatures with multiple attacks that appear in groups can wind up being annoying instead. Such combat encounters can take longer to resolve, as they inevitably require lots of defense rolls. Instead, if a creature needs to take on a group of opponents, give it an option for doing so with a single attack. Maybe it attacks with a bite normally, but it can emit a mental blast in a radius to affect more than one target. Figure out what fits the creature and works best.

BYPASSING ARMOR

Attacks that ignore Armor are interesting because they really scare players. Such attacks might be from intense heat, out-of-phase tentacles, or something so sharp that it cuts right through whatever the hero is wearing.

Use your discretion and logic however. For example, if Armor comes from a magical force field, a fiery blast seems less likely to ignore it. In any case, use this kind of thing sparingly. If everything ignores Armor, Armor loses its meaning.

POISON AND DISEASE

A level 1 creature could be poisonous, but its venom should inflict a few points of damage at most. The venom of a level 6 creature, on the other hand, might knock a hero down a step on the damage track or put them into a coma if they fail a Might defense roll.

OTHER SPECIAL ABILITIES

In *Shotguns & Sorcery*, a creature can have almost any kind of power or ability you want to dream up. In effect, it comes down to what kind of roll the player makes: an Intellect defense roll to ward off a weird mind attack, a Speed defense roll to dodge a barrage of spikes, a Might defense roll to resist a cellular disintegration, or perhaps something else.

The difficulty of the roll and the damage dealt by the attack is based primarily on the level of the creature, although this can be modified if it seems appropriate.

In some cases, there's probably no roll involved. The creature just walks through the wall, teleports, or melts the metal object it holds in its clutches. Although some of these abilities can give a creature a tactical advantage in a combat encounter, they're just as often there simply to make the encounter more interesting.

This means that a creature's level is probably more important than any particular ability when it comes to determining its toughness. And it also means that you don't have to save the cool abilities just for high-level creatures.

STATTING ANIMALS

Normal animals are typically fairly simple in terms of stats. Most are just a level, or a level with a single modification. Although there are exceptions, anything smaller than a dog is likely level 1. In Dragon City, people deal with rats all the time. A single one of them isn't going to frighten anyone. A swarm of rats, on the other hand, can be a real problem.

Here are a few examples for you:

Cat: Level 1

Rat: Level 1

Hawk: Level 2; flies a long distance each round

Dog: Level 2, level 3 for perception

Dog, Guard: Level 3, level 4 for attacks and perception

Viper: Level 2; bite inflicts 3 points of Speed damage that ignores Armor

Donkey: Level 2; moves a long distance each round

Horse: Level 3; moves a long distance each round

Bear, Black: Level 3, level 4 for attacks

Bear, Grizzly: Level 5; health 20; Armor 1

CREATURES IN A GROUP

Although groups of creatures can make for an interesting encounter, remember that not all creatures move in groups, nor do they live in groups all the time. For example, some might join together to defend against intruders, but only after several days of intrusions or a particularly invasive and successful assault on their homes.

This gives you a different tactic to use after the heroes have rampaged through a particular area. The next time they come around, they might discover that the local creatures are better prepared for them.

Many predators—especially large ones—are solitary creatures with large territories who have no interest in spending time with others of their species. In fact, if forced out of their home area, they might displace someone else from theirs and claim it as their own, propagating the problem.

When making group encounters, consider not just the number of creatures and how they act when in a group, but also what an encounter might look like when it includes multiple types of creatures or creatures of varying ages and sizes. That sort of variety requires attention to detail, but it can help keep encounters from feeling like a grind.

Sometimes creature groups have more than one type of creature in the mix. The PCs may be caught between a trio of predators and a herd of prey and suddenly find they are fighting not just one group of creatures but two. Or they may discover that the zombie they've been stalking is actually shambling after a pack of werewolves. In another case, a creature may have a symbiotic or parasitic relationship with others, something the PCs discover only after they attack and are instantly overrun by the parasites fleeing the host body.

SWARM RULES

Sometimes creatures that generally operate individually team up to work together. These rules cover how to handle a group of such creatures acting in concert with each other to add up to more than the sum of their parts.

The GM can take any creature and have a group of six to ten of them attack en masse as a single creature that is two levels higher than the basic individual, inflicting double the original creature's normal damage. So thirty level 1 kobolds would attack as five level 3 mobs.

Some creatures use their own specialized swarm rules that supersede these rules. Stick to them when they crop up in your game.

GROUP NAMES

Most creatures in a group can be called a herd, a clan, a pride, or simply a pack, but others have specific collective nouns that are commonly used. Some examples include:

- A coven of witches
- A gaggle of gremlins
- A hassle of hell hounds
- A set of shadows
- A troupe of mimics
- A copse of dryads

THE ECOLOGY OF SHOTGUNS & SORCERY

The ecology of the world of *Shotguns & Sorcery* is much like that of North America—other than the existence of all sorts of fantastic creatures, of course. In addition to the standard birds, squirrels, mice, and other animals, there are dozens of different types of monsters mixed into the environment in what may seem like a haphazard way to the untrained eye.

That's because those creatures have been winnowed down over the thousand years since the founding of Dragon City. They once came from all over the continent, much as the original founders of the city did, but just like the free peoples, they were ravaged by the legions of the undead that conquered the land. The ones that remain are those who have figured out some kind of way to live alongside the undead.

In most cases, that's because the surviving monsters have some kind of edge over the undead. Maybe they're faster or stronger or meaner. Maybe they can hide in places the undead can't reach. Maybe they just don't make for good fodder to sate the undead's endless hunger. In each case, they figured out some way to get through their days, even with the ever-present threat of a violent death hanging over them.

FEEDING DRAGON CITY

One of the biggest challenges at the founding of Dragon City was figuring out a way to feed so many people trapped in such a relatively small region. The nature of the threat from the Ruler of the Dead meant that the surrounding areas, which were once filled with open farmland and pastures, were impossible to protect. The people who descended on the mountain to settle there under the Dragon Emperor's protection brought supplies with them, but they only lasted so long.

At first, the early citizens of Dragon City used the open land in the Village as densely packed farms. The demand for space in which people could live soon outstripped the need for farmland though, and the animals and crops were shoved into smaller and smaller areas. Eventually, most of these farms were forced outside of the Great Circle, even though it might have seemed there was no safe place left for them to go.

To avoid the undead, the farmers established their crops and their pastures in high mountain regions above the reach of the undead. Unfortunately, many plants and animals did not thrive in this area, but the farmers quickly turned to the use of creatures and crops that could adapt. Because of this, the most common kind of meat and dairy products available throughout Dragon City are that of the mountain goats that can live comfortably in those high altitudes—and which can manage to scramble away from any undead sturdy or determined enough to make it that high atop the mountain.

While Dragon Mountain stands mostly alone in its region stabbing out of the surrounding lands, the Great Circle doesn't actually encircle the entire mountain. Far more of the mountain lies unprotected and exposed than sits inside the wall. However, the undead mostly can't scale their way to such heights, and regular cleansing sweeps by the Dragon Emperor keep them from ever establishing a foothold in the area. Because of that, the goats he devours as a fee for his services seem a small price to pay.

WATER

If there's one thing that's more important than food, it's water. The top of Dragon Mountain would likely be covered in snow year round if it wasn't for the heat that the Dragon Emperor generates inside of its zenith. Even so, there are times during the year that the mountain's peak wears a snowy cap.

The snowmelt that runs down the mountain merges with the water from underground streams the dwarves have pumped up into the heights of the Stronghold. That becomes the Crystal River, which flows underground for a bit, tapped by various wells throughout the Elven Reaches, Gnometown, and the Burrow. It's not until the upper edge of the Village that the river emerges into the sunlight and spills openly down the mountainside.

Even so, most people are smart enough not to drink directly from the Crystal River. You can do so in a pinch, but the waterway carries a lot of the city's waste downhill until it tumbles over the shoulders of the Great Gate to pool in the Lonely Lake. The wells, on the other hand, are mostly clean and offer up water that's far less likely to ruin your health.

POLLUTION

Unlike in our world, in the land of *Shotguns & Sorcery*, pollution and the climate change it causes aren't much of an issue. That's because the undead hordes of the Ruler of the Dead have slaughtered most of the sentient creatures that once resided on the continent. The magically motivated monsters wreak all sorts of destruction on the world, but the dangers they pose are generally more personal and immediate in nature.

If you can manage to deal with the threat of the undead, outside of Dragon City you can see that much of the environment itself has reverted to a wild, untended state. In places where the undead don't congregate, the rivers run clean, the air is clear, and the smells are generally pleasant.

The closer you get to Dragon City, though, the worse it gets. The groans of the undead drown out the sounds of any living creatures at night, and the area outside the Great Circle stinks of rotting flesh.

The situations inside the city are often just as bad, and the closer you get to the Great Circle, the worse they are. All the foul stuff in the city runs downhill. The Elven Reaches seem pretty pristine, and the dwarves in the Stronghold are good about burying their waste in their deepest mines. Once you get down to Gnometown and the Burrow, though, grime begins to accrete in the gutters.

By the time you reach the Village, it can get downright disgusting, especially if you find yourself in a back alley where people have been dumping their refuse for collection for the past thousand years. In the summers, the heat cooks the remnants of waste into a horrible stench. The prevailing winds run from west to east, which is why the choice real estate tends to be in the western part of the city, near the Night Tower, Wizards Way, and even the Quill. The east is generally worse.

IMPORTS & EXPORTS

While Dragon City does its best to be self-sufficient, it's a struggle to meet the needs of its citizens with only the resources on hand. While the Dragon Emperor doesn't mind ruling over his subjects by force of fang, many of the city's other leaders would prefer to not have the entire place devolve into anarchy as the citizens fight pitched battles over the scraps of food and water and whatnot they can find.

To that end, some people do a thriving business bringing items in and out of Dragon City, both legally and illegally. Given the location of the city and the nature of the undead creatures surrounding it, this is not a venture for the faint of heart. Some manage it by means of either extremely fast or well-armed caravans, but it's usually just a matter of time before the poorly stacked odds catch up with them.

There are a few well-funded operations that ferry items in and out via air. It's possible—although not comfortable—to make the trip to the port at Watersmeet via flying carpet, for instance. Longer journeys can be far more perilous, although some flying ships have been constructed for this purpose and make irregular forays over Dragon City's walls.

Hard-to-find foodstuffs are in high demand inside the city and command tremendous prices, the kind that only the residents of the city's upper reaches can afford. When a shipment arrives, this is often the occasion for a great feast in the Stronghold or a swanky dinner party in the Elven Reaches.

As for outgoing goods, the enchanted items made in Dragon City are considered to be among the finest in the world. In addition to that, the treasures that adventurers haul out of the surrounding area are prized far beyond Dragon City's walls and provide a good chunk of the city's most valuable commerce.

The rarest export of all is, of course, dragon essence, but the trade of it and dragonfire is strictly prohibited. This means it commands such an exorbitant price in lands beyond that desperate people are often ready to risk their freedom or even their very lives to procure and sell it.

MAGIC

A shrewd economist could probably figure out that, even with a concerted and coordinated effort, it would be nearly impossible to supply the needs of Dragon City's citizens with the resources the place has to offer. That's where the minds at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship come in. Over the centuries, they've developed a system of delivering magically generated food and drink throughout the city, and it's this that has kept the people of Dragon City alive through years both fat and lean.

The food the wizards generate for the city is generally bland and filling. It is enough to live on, although it makes for dull and boring dining. Still, the people of the Village and Goblintown—who eat the vast bulk of this stuff—rarely complain at more than the volume of a quiet grumble. When such meals make the difference between eating or going hungry, they do their best to be grateful that they're not being tossed over the Great Circle to become fodder for the Ruler of the Dead's army instead.

Some of the wealthier homes in the Elven Reaches and the Stronghold feature a magic box that can instantly generate meals for their owners. They are limited, however, to working three times a day and rarely produce enough to feed more than the household members and a few guests. It's one thing for magic to produce simple things like light or even flight, and something else entirely for it to produce complete meals on demand, which are much more complex than they seem.

Of course, when the wealthy and powerful want to celebrate something important or show off to their friends—or, as is often the case, both—they can hire in a magician from Wizards Way to supply them with whatever they like. The only limits then are their breadth of their imagination and the depths of their purses.

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTINGS

The listings of the creatures in this book each have a number of entries in them. Here's what they mean and how to use them in your game.

LEVEL

All creatures (including NPCs and even PCs) have a level. The level determines the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent.

In each entry, the target number for the creature or NPC is listed in parentheses after its level. The target number is three times the level.

DESCRIPTION

Following the name of the creature or NPC appears a general description of its appearance, nature, intelligence, and background. This gives you a lot of the flavor you need to place the creature in your game, and it concentrates on how the creature fits into the overall story.

MOTIVE

This entry is a way to help the GM understand what a creature or NPC wants. Every creature or person wants something, even if it's just to be left alone.

Not every creature of a particular type has the same motives though. Individuals can vary from the core examples in drastic ways.

ENVIRONMENT

This entry describes whether the creature tends to be solitary or travel in groups and what kind of terrain it inhabits. It often mentions whether the creature can be found inside Dragon City, below it, or somewhere beyond the Great Circle.

Of course, it's always possible to find creatures outside of their standard environment. Such jarring displacements can be the source of adventures all on their own.

HEALTH

A creature's target number is usually also its health. This number indicates the amount of damage the creature can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated.

DAMAGE INFlicted

Generally, when creatures hit in combat, they inflict their level in damage regardless of the form of attack they happen to employ. Some creatures inflict more or less or have a special modifier to their damage.

Intelligent NPCs often use weapons, but this is more a flavor issue than a mechanical one. In other words, it doesn't matter if a level 3 orc uses a sword or its fists. The attack deals the same damage if it hits.

ARMOR

This is the creature's Armor value. Sometimes the number represents physical armor, and other times it represents natural protection.

This entry doesn't appear in the game stats if a creature has no Armor.

MOVEMENT

Movement determines how far the creature can move in a single turn. If the creature normally flies, that distance is listed alongside its ground-based movement.

MODIFICATIONS

Use these numbers when a creature's entry says to use a different level. For example, a level 4 creature might say "defends as level 5." This means that PCs attacking that creature must reach a target number of 15 (for difficulty 5) instead of 12 (for difficulty 4) to hit it.

In special circumstances, some creatures have other modifications particular to certain situations, but these are generally specific to their level.

COMBAT

This entry gives advice on using the creature in combat, such as "This creature uses ambushes and hit-and-run tactics." In this section, you can also find any special abilities, such as immunities, poisons, and healing skills.

GMs should be logical about a creature's reaction to a PC's action or attack. For example, a mechanical being is obviously immune to normal diseases, a character can't poison a being of energy (at least not with a conventional poison), and so on.

Conversely, unusual creatures may be particularly vulnerable to certain kinds of off-the-wall tactics that the heroes may concoct on their own. Keep an open mind to such explorations while making sure that you remain true to the core concepts behind that type of creature.

We can't possibly list every exception in each entry. Instead, we rely on you, as the GM, to use your common sense and think about each situation as logically as you can manage.

INTERACTION

This entry gives advice on interacting with the creature. Sometimes this can differ greatly, depending on where the heroes encounter the creature—or on other circumstances particular to that creature.

USE

This entry gives the GM suggestions for how to use the creature in a game session. This can vary a lot, depending on the needs of your game.

The suggestions listed here are just that: suggestions. Feel free to use the creatures in whatever way works best for you and makes the most sense in your own story.

LOOT

This entry indicates what valuables the PCs might gain if they take items from their fallen foes—or if they trade with or trick them.

Some creatures carry no loot or simply have nothing on them that most characters would value. In such cases, there is nothing listed here.

GM INTRUSION

This entry suggests a way to use a GM intrusion in an encounter with the creature. It's just one possible idea of many, and you are encouraged to come up with your own uses for this game mechanic too.

CREATURES BY LEVEL

(*Creatures with asterisks appear in the *Shotguns & Sorcery* core rulebook)

LEVEL 1

Creeping Crud	1
Dwarf	1
Elf	1
Eyes, the	1
Giant Maggot	1
Gnome*	1
Goblin*	1
Halfling	1
Handy	1
Human	1
Kobold*	1
Mandrake	1
Needle Bush*	1



LEVEL 2

Beastman*	2
Colony Rat Swarm*	2
Digger*	2
Electric Bramble	2
Faerie*	2
Godehay	2
Gremlin	2
Lizard Person*	2
Merfolk*	2
Orc	2
Rat-King*	2
Rock Maggots	2
Skeletal Warrior*	2
Zombie*	2

LEVEL 3

Animated Armor*	3
Bloodroot*	3
Dwarven Survivor	3
Face Worms	3
Follower of Ogili	3
Gaunt*	3
Giant Cockroach	3
Giant Rat*	3
Giant Spider*	3
Hobgoblin*	3
Lurcher	3
Mimic	3
Ooze*	3
Phantom*	3
Psyfox	3
Stalker	3
Swambie	3
Turtler	3
Vampire Thrall*	3

LEVEL 4

Boneless*	4
Bugbear	4
Crusher	4
Deerly Departed	4
Dryad*	4
Elemental, Fire*	4
Elemental, Water*	4
Ghost*	4
Ghoul*	4
Giant Snake*	4
Griffin*	4
Hell Hound	4
Last Breath*	4
Ocusar	4
Ogre*	4
Poltergeist	4
Revenant*	4
Technological Marvel of the Future No. 1	4
Warhorse	4
Werewolf*	4

LEVEL 5

Angel	5
Cruul*	5
Demon*	5
Elemental, Air*	5
Elemental, Earth*	5
Fury*	5
Giant Scorpion*	5
Golem, Flesh*	5
Manticore*	5
Mummy*	5
Specter*	5
Strangler*	5

LEVEL 6

B'ooze	6
Chimera, Undead	6
Doppelganger*	6
Elemental, Void*	6
Golem, Clay*	6
Shadow	6
Troll*	6
Vampire*	6
Water Bears	6
Wendigo	6

LEVEL 7

Giant*	7
Harpy	7
Hydra*	7
Sewer Beast*	7
Wyvern*	7

LEVEL 8

Cyclops	8
Golem, Iron*	8
Lich	8

LEVEL 9

Legion	9
Vampire Lord*	9

CREATURE INDEX WITH LEVEL

(*Creatures with asterisks appear in the *Shotguns & Sorcery* core rulebook)

A

Angel	5
Animated Armor*	3

B

Beastman*	2
Bloodroot*	3
Boneless*	4
B'ooze	6
Bugbear	4

C

Colony Rat Swarm*	2
Chimera, Undead	6
Creeping Crud	1
Cruul*	5
Crusher	4
Cyclops	8

D

Deerly Departed	4
Demon*	5
Digger*	2
Doppelganger*	6
Dryad*	4
Dwarf	1
Dwarven Survivor	3

E

Electric Bramble	2
Elemental, Air*	5
Elemental, Earth*	5
Elemental, Fire*	4
Elemental, Void*	6
Elemental, Water*	4
Elf	1
Eyes, the	1

F

Face Worms	3
Faerie*	2
Fury*	5
Follower of Ogili	3

G

Gaunt*	3
Ghost*	4
Ghoul*	4
Giant*	7
Giant Cockroach	3
Giant Maggot	1
Giant Rat*	3
Giant Scorpion*	5
Giant Snake*	4
Giant Spider*	3
Gnome*	1
Goblin*	1
Godehay	2
Golem, Clay*	6
Golem, Flesh*	5
Golem, Iron*	8
Gremlin	2
Griffin*	4

H

Halfling	1
Handy	1
Harpy	7
Hell Hound	4
Hobgoblin*	3
Human	1
Hydra*	7

K

Kobold*	1
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L

Last Breath*	4
Legion	9
Lich	8
Lizard Person*	2
Lurcher	3

M

Mandrake	1
Manticore*	5
Merfolk*	2
Mimic	3
Mummy*	5

N

Needle Bush*	1
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O

Ocusar	4
Ogre*	4
Ooze*	3
Orc	2



P

Phantom*	3
Poltergeist	4
Psyfox	3

R

Rat-King*	2
Revenant*	4
Rock Maggots	2

S

Sewer Beast*	7
Shadow	6
Skeletal Warrior*	2
Specter*	5
Stalker	3
Strangler*	5
Swambie	3

T

Technological Marvel of the Future No. 1	4
Troll*	6
Turtler	3

V

Vampire*	6
Vampire Lord*	9
Vampire Thrall*	3

W

Water Bears	6
Warhorse	4
Wendigo	6
Werewolf*	4
Wyvern*	7

Z

Zombie*	2
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RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES

Use these charts to randomly create encounters, based on the heroes' location.
If you roll a result and aren't happy with it, feel free to reroll for something you like better.

THE ELVEN REACHES

01	Angel
02–09	Animated Armor
10–12	B'ooze
13–20	Bugbear (Mercenary)
21–25	Creeping Crud
26–27	Demon
28	Doppelganger
29–31	Ghost
32–40	Golem, Clay
41–45	Handy
46–55	Imperial Dragon's Guard
56–56	Last Breath
57–70	Muscle
71–80	Ogre Mercenary
81–82	Poltergeist
83–86	Psyfox
87–89	Shadow
90–98	Technological Marvel of the Future No. 1
99	Vampire Lord
00	Wendigo

THE STRONGHOLD

01	Angel
02–08	Animated Armor
09–12	B'ooze
13–16	Bugbear (Mercenary)
17–20	Colony Rat Swarm
21–24	Creeping Crud
25–26	Crusher
27	Cruul
28	Demon
29–32	Digger
33	Doppelganger
34–38	Face Worms
39–40	Ghost
41–42	Giant Rat
43–50	Golem, Clay
51–55	Handy
56–65	Imperial Dragon's Guard
66	Last Breath
67–77	Muscle
78–83	Ogre Mercenary
84–85	Poltergeist
86–91	Psyfox
92–96	Rock Maggots
97–99	Shadow
00	Wendigo

GNOMETOWN

01	Angel
02–03	B'ooze
04–05	Bugbear (Mercenary)
06–07	Creeping Crud
08	Demon
09	Doppelganger
10–14	Face Worms
15–17	Ghost
18–30	Gremlin
31–35	Handy
36–45	Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard
46–60	Muscle
61–70	Ogre Mercenary
71–73	Poltergeist
74–85	Psyfox
86–87	Shadow
88–99	Warhorse
00	Wendigo

THE BIG BURROW

01	Angel
02–04	B'ooze
05–10	Bugbear (Mercenary)
11–12	Cruul
13	Demon
14	Doppelganger
15–22	Face Worms
23–25	Ghost
26–40	Gremlin
41–45	Handy
46–60	Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard
61–70	Muscle
71–80	Ogre Mercenary
81–85	Poltergeist
86–96	Psyfox
97–99	Shadow
00	Wendigo

THE VILLAGE

01	Angel
02–06	B'ooze
07–17	Bugbear (Mercenary)
18–20	Colony Rat Swarm
21–25	Creeping Crud
26–29	Cruul
30	Demon
31	Doppelganger
32–34	Face Worms
35–38	Follower of Ogili
39–40	Ghost
41–43	Giant Cockroach
44–49	Giant Rat
50–58	Gremlin
59–63	Handy
64–66	Hobgoblin
67–74	Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard
75	Last Breath
76–82	Muscle
83–87	Ogre Mercenary
88–89	Poltergeist
90–94	Psyfox
95–96	Shadow
97	Vampire
98	Wendigo
99–00	Zombie





GOBLINTOWN

01	Angel
02–05	B'ooze
6–14	Bugbear
15–20	Colony Rat Swarm
21–26	Creeping Crud
27–29	Cruul
30	Demon
31	Doppelganger
32–34	Face Worms
35–37	Follower of Ogili
38–39	Ghost
40–44	Giant Cockroach
45–48	Giant Rat
49–50	Gremlin
51–54	Handy
55–79	Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard
80	Last Breath
81–91	Muscle
92	Poltergeist
93–95	Shadow
96	Vampire
97	Wendigo
98–00	Zombie

AROUND DRAGON MOUNTAIN

01	Angel
02–15	Beastman
16–25	Bugbear
26–30	Digger
31–35	Dryad
36–45	Electric Bramble
46–49	Elemental, Earth
50–55	Faerie
56–58	Giant
59–70	Godehay
71–74	Griffin
75–78	Mimic
79–85	Needle Bush
86–87	Ogre
88–89	Phantom
90–94	Rock Maggots
95–97	Strangler
98–00	Wyvern

UNDER DRAGON MOUNTAIN

01	Angel
02–06	Colony Rat Swarm
07–08	Creeping Crud
09–17	Crusher
18–19	Cruul
20–31	Digger
32–36	Elemental, Earth
37–39	Elemental, Void
40–43	Face Worms
44–54	Gaunt
55–61	Giant Rat
62–64	Giant Snake
65–67	Golem, Flesh
68	Hydra
69	Lich
70–72	Mimic
73–83	Ooze
84–87	Psyfox
88–89	Rat-King
90–97	Rock Maggots
98–00	Sewer Beast

OUTSIDE THE GREAT CIRCLE

01–04	Beastman
05–08	Bugbear
09	Chimera, Undead
10–11	Deerly Departed
12–14	Dryad
15–19	Dwarven Survivor
20–21	Electric Bramble
22	Elemental, Air
23	Elemental, Fire
24–26	Eyes, the
27–29	Ghost
30–32	Ghoul
33–35	Giant Cockroach
36–38	Giant Maggot
39–41	Giant Spider
42–48	Godehay
49	Hell Hound
50–56	Mandrake
57–61	Needle Bush
62–64	Ocusar
65–66	Revenant
67–70	Skeletal Warrior
71	Specter
72–73	Strangler
74–81	Turtler
82	Werewolf
83–94	Zombie
95–00	Zombie Horde (6–10)



WATERSMEET

01	Angel
02–06	Beastman
07–09	Bloodroot
10–11	Boneless
12	B’ooze
13–15	Bugbear
16	Chimera, Undead
17–20	Cyclops
21–24	Dwarven Survivor
25–27	Elemental, Water
28–29	Follower of Ogili
30–33	Ghost
34–35	Giant Cockroach
36–38	Giant Maggot
39–40	Giant Rat
41–43	Giant Snake
44	Hell Hound
45–50	Lizard Person
51–53	Lurcher
54–60	Merfolk
61–62	Mimic
63	Mummy
64–67	Needle Bush
68–72	Phantom
73	Revenant
74	Specter
75–76	Stalker
77–85	Swambie
86–88	Water Bears
89	Wendigo
90–97	Zombie
98–00	Zombie Horde (6–10)



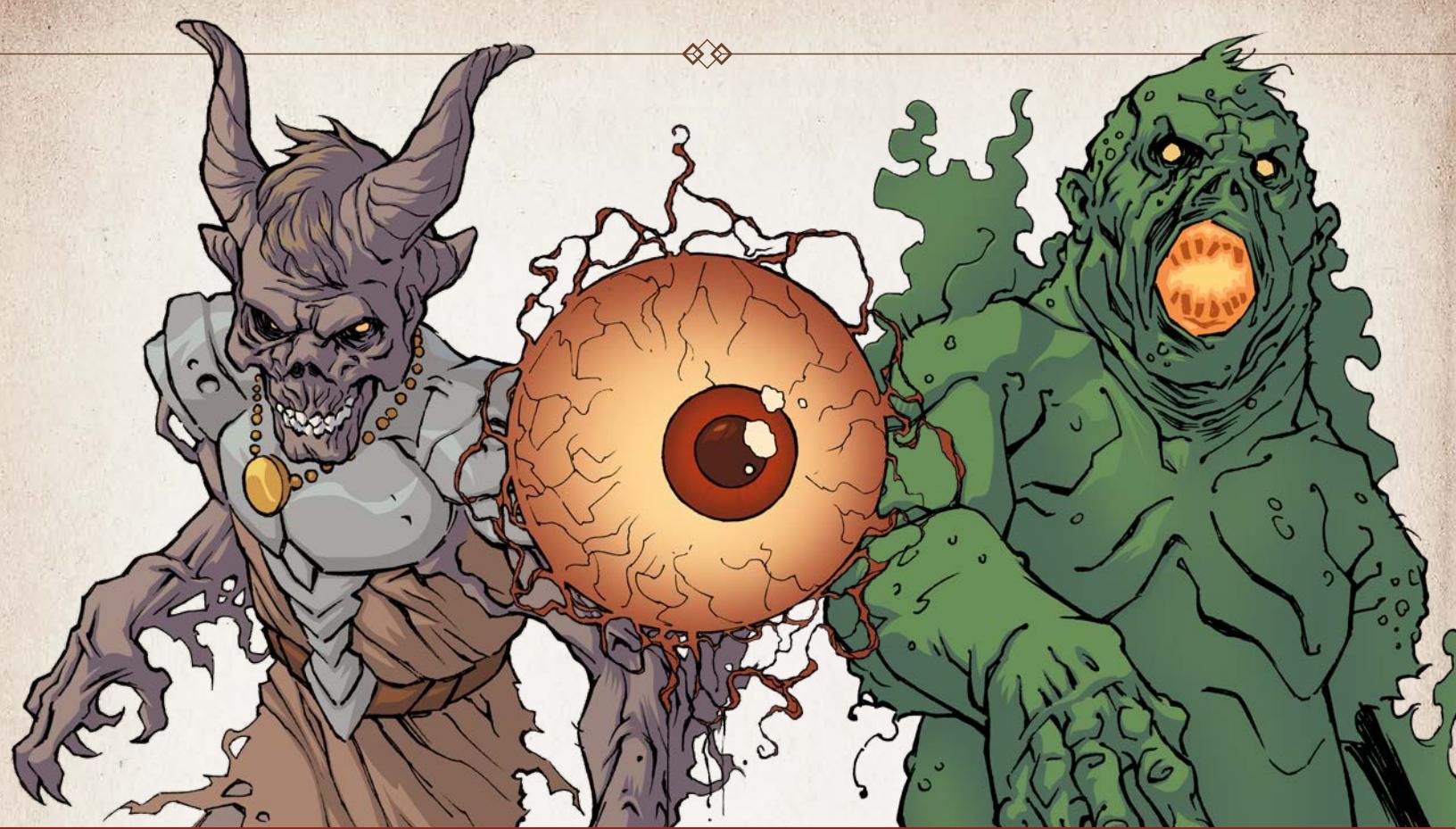
THE OUTER WILDS

01–03	Beastman
04–06	Bloodroot
07–08	Boneless
09–11	Bugbear
12	Chimera, Undead
13–14	Cyclops
15–16	Deerly Departed
17–19	Dryad
20–23	Dwarven Survivor
24–27	Electric Bramble
28	Elemental, Air
29	Elemental, Earth
30	Elemental, Fire
31	Elemental, Void
32–35	Faerie
36	Fury
37–38	Ghoul
39–42	Giant
43–45	Giant Scorpion
46–47	Giant Snake
48–50	Giant Spider
51–54	Godehay
55	Griffin
56–60	Harpy
61	Hell Hound
62	Hydra
63	Lich
64–66	Lizard Person
67	Lurcher
68–71	Mandrake
72	Manticore
73–74	Merfolk
75	Mimic
76	Mummy
77–80	Needle Bush
81	Phantom
82	Psyfox
83	Revenant
84–86	Stalker
87–88	Strangler
89	Troll
90	Vampire Lord
91–92	Vampire Thrall
93–94	Water Bears
95	Wendigo
96	Werewolf
97	Wyvern
98–99	Zombie
00	Zombie Horde (6–10)

WIZARDS WAY

01	Angel
02–10	Animated Armor
11–20	Bugbear (Mercenary)
20–30	Cruul
31–35	Demon
36	Doppelganger
37–40	Follower of Ogili
41–44	Ghost
45–60	Golem, Clay
61–63	Golem, Flesh
64–70	Golem, Iron
71–75	Imperial Dragon’s Guard
76–80	Muscle
81–84	Pair of Ogre Mercenaries
85–86	Psyfox
87–89	Shadow
90–99	Technological Marvel of the Future No. 1
00	Wendigo





CHAPTER 2: NEW CREATURES

USING MONSTERS

As a *Shotguns & Sorcery* game master, you have a lot of options open to you when you create your adventures. The creatures in this book and in the core rulebook are meant to provide you with inspiration in your schemes for the amazing stories you're going to be concocting with your players. While you can certainly just toss them into your game to provide punching bags for the heroes, that sort of random encounter quickly pales if that's the only way the characters find themselves embroiled in combat. The best fights mean something to everyone involved.

As you read through this section of the book, think about how you might introduce these creatures to your characters in a manner that means something to them in a personal way. Consider who they are and what they're trying to accomplish, and then present them with monsters that can provide them with the best and most engaging challenges.

Although you should generally have the heroes face monsters that are appropriate to their level, feel free to shake that up a bit as you go. If the monsters are weaker than the heroes, toss a few more of the creatures into the mix to help even things out. Even the best prepared heroes are sure to find themselves worn down eventually.

Alternatively, don't be afraid to present the heroes with a monster that's far above their level. That's the sort of thing to give them pause and help keep them humble about their place in the world. Just be sure that you give them a means of retreat. It's not fair to simply crush the heroes straight out, but if they have the ability to leave when they need to, you can give them an incentive to come back when they're stronger—or at least when they have better weapons at hand.

Similarly, think of ways to mix and match monsters in your encounters. You don't have to just toss a single kind of creature against the heroes at any given time. Find reasons for monsters of different types to be working together—or maybe even exploiting each other—and you may well discover that you have the seeds for an entire adventure in your hands.

Also, don't hesitate to come up with monsters of your own. They can be created from whole cloth, of course, but if you want to start gently, you can simply begin with riffing on the creatures in this book and the core rulebook.

Give one of them an extra power. Take away a weakness. Combine one kind of monster with another. See where your imagination takes you. You'll enjoy your adventures all the more by tailoring the monsters to your group's needs and making them your own.

ANGEL ~ S [18]

There's a bit of magic lying dormant in everything. Intent may help shape it, and dragon essence may help draw it out, but even when no one is around, the earth quietly buzzes with the stuff, responding to changes all around it. Just as acts of great determination can channel powerful magic into spells, acts of great evil can conjure demons—and acts of other kinds can summon angels.

Like their devilish counterparts, angels have no “true” form. They appear as angels because whoever is involved in their creation expects them to look like that. Most angels are avenging spirits, born out of a strong desire to see justice done. If an event was wicked enough to conjure a demon into this world, then often someone's wish to right that same wrong is strong enough to form an angel. Rarely—very rarely—positive emotions can summon an angel into this world that is set upon healing and helping. Angels of that kind are dwarfed by their avenging counterparts. Those wrathful ones can serious trouble, especially in cases of mistaken identity.

The elder folk of Dragon City, those that remember the old traditions, are the ones who tend to summon the big, winged, flaming-sword-type angels. Angels originating from the emotions of younger people manifest as all sorts of things: glowing orbs, ghosts of dead loved ones, even imaginary friends. Whatever a given character thinks will best protect them, that is the form their angel takes. As a result, the abilities and attributes of angels vary greatly and can even shift over time, though there are a few things they all have in common.

MOTIVE: Fulfill the desires that brought them into the world, then leave the world again.

ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere, but most often places of magical significance within the city walls.

HEALTH: 25

DAMAGE INFlicted: 5–7 points of an elemental type of damage as chosen by the GM.

MOVEMENT: Short; long when flying.

MODIFICATIONS: Persuasion tasks as level 6.

COMBAT: Depending on the form the angel takes, it can attack with any kind of fitting elemental damage. By default, it attacks with void damage, draining 6 points of damage from its opponent while healing itself for 2 points. On the off chance its form justifies another type of damage, one of the following modifications can be used.



FIRE: Deals 6 points of damage and sets the offending creature on fire. On all subsequent turns, the burning creature must either make an Intellect defense roll to put themselves out or enter a large enough body of water to douse themselves. Otherwise they take an additional 2 points of damage

WATER: On a successful hit, the angel deals 5 points of damage, grabbing the offending creature with a tendril of holy water and lifting them high into the air, where they begin to be drowned. They must make a successful Might defense roll within the next three rounds or suffer from partial drowning, moving them one step down the damage track and tossing them prone.

EARTH: These angels are rare—few associate supernatural vengeance with the earth—but that makes them no less deadly. They attack with magical boulders from afar and pillars that jet up from the ground when up close. All creatures fighting an earth angel take a -1 penalty to their Armor versus the angel's attacks, and on a successful hit from the angel, a creature takes 5 points of damage and must succeed on a Might defense roll or be knocked prone.

AIR: A whirlwind of righteous vengeance, these angels excel at blowing their opponents around. A creature hit by an air angel's attack must succeed at a Might defense roll or be blown back up to 50 feet, taking 5 points of damage, plus 2 more points of damage if they smack into any hard surfaces.

INTERACTION: To all but their prey, angels seem reasonable, if deceitful. In the pursuit of fulfilling the desire for which they were created, some have been known to even befriend their hapless creators, forming a guardian angel-type bond. However, if questioned about their true nature or purpose, they become angry, particularly if the questioner is any sort of official or investigator.

USE: A prestigious member of the Bricht clan has taken in an orphaned dwarf, but the child's imaginary friend may be more than it seems.

GM INTRUSION: A character looks too closely into the eyes of the angel and is taken aback with the angel's righteous fervor, forcing that character to make an Intellect defense roll. On a failure, the character is taken with fear and must flee for the next minute.

B'OOZE ~ 6 [18]

To an outside observer the Imperial Dragon Guard's war on dragonfire may seem overzealous, hypocritical, and nothing more than an excuse for the powerful to imprison the oppressed.

These observations are all correct.

But just because the prohibition of dragonfire has been terrible doesn't mean the stuff can't be dangerous under the right circumstances. It's more potent than liquor, and it's got a heck of a lot more kickback. Addiction is common.

People have died. People have come back.

Ghosts are magical beings, and when someone ODs on dragonfire, their death is both untimely and magically charged, the ideal circumstances for creating a b'ooze. These creatures are ghosts, but unlike your average spirit, they are driven solely by their own anger over dying. Not vengeance, not depression, just frustration. When a normal ghost enters a room, the temperature drops. When a b'ooze enters the room, the temperature rises. People report sweating and getting hot shivers down their spine.

MOTIVE: Rage. If they happen to still be connected enough to this plane to remain sane, they may communicate their plight to characters willing to listen.

ENVIRONMENT: Back alley bars. Old run-down speakeasies. Disused drug dens. Generally, once a b'ooze starts inhabiting a place, that place doesn't remain in use by anyone else for very long.

HEALTH: 18

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 6 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth as level 8. Frightening others as level 9.

COMBAT: As spectral beings, b'oozes outright ignore all normal physical damage. Energy attacks and magical spells interact enough with b'oozes to do half damage, but only spells or weapons designed to fight spirits can hit them for full points.

B'oozes don't immediately attack upon being approached. They let out an aura of fear and anger for a short distance all around them. Any character wishing to approach the b'ooze must succeed on an Intellect Defense roll against being frightened or take 1 point of Intellect damage and refuse to enter the b'ooze's aura for the next hour. The aura is so strong that it's often hard to tell whether any given area is inhabited by a b'ooze or rather hexed with a strong fear charm. B'oozes tend to hide within their environments, so even for the few people who make it past the aura's outer limits, it's rare to see a b'ooze that does not want to be seen.

If a character can track down a b'ooze furious enough to want to fight, the b'ooze usually attempts to magically incinerate anything it sees as a threat. Spectral tendrils of fire shoot out of the body of the b'ooze at opponents in immediate range, dealing 6 points of damage to begin with and an additional 2 points of damage every subsequent round until the burned character can succeed on an Intellect task to put themselves out—or find enough water to douse themselves with a single action.

If, for some reason, the b'ooze cannot attack with fire, it can concentrate its Aura of fear and anger into a kind of attack.

This psychic blast deals 3 points of Intellect damage to a single creature in a short range, ignoring Armor, and whoever it hits is frozen in fear for the next round.

INTERACTION: Most b'oozes can at least be spoken to. Their deaths may have been tragic, but they were not so incredibly grotesque that they are disconnected from communication. However, expect a lot more being talked at than being talked to. B'oozes mostly just want to shout about their plight to anybody who cares to listen. They don't ask for salvation or closure, though that would certainly set them free. They just want to complain.

USE: There's a bar in the oldest part of Goblintown that no one ever visits.

It's an inviting little two-story red-wooden shack. It was closed over fifty years ago, yet it still looks as well kept as the day it opened.

Urban explorers have tried to enter the building, but all have mysteriously turned tail and run as soon as they reached the doorway. At night, light appears in some of the upstairs windows, and the soft whispers of a man fed up with the world and ranting about it can be heard from the street.

A long time ago this place was a hideout for a loosely organized Goblintown gang. They recently decided they'd like the place back, and they're willing to pay brave souls to help them reclaim it.

Your job is to come along with a team of the gang's best people to spend a night in the bar and deal with whatever might be haunting it.

LOOT: The old speakeasies and the like that b'oozes haunt are bound to have some forgotten valuables lying about. Dragonfire caches in particular are never far away.

GM INTRUSION: A character is hit by an extremely strong rage blast and suddenly begins to feel as if their brain has been set on fire. They immediately take 6 points of Intellect damage, and on every subsequent round they must succeed on an Intellect task to calm themselves down or continue to take 1 additional point of Intellect damage.



BUGBEAR ~ 4 [12]

You know, they may not look like it, but bugbears are really a bunch of sweethearts when you get to know them. There used to be thousands of the big goofballs. Whole flocks. Always rarer than your average goblin or orc, even in the old days, but ever-present. Of the peoples that existed before the rise of the Ruler of the Dead, bugbears were always the most tribal and nomadic, but also the friendliest. Solitary, but always willing to collaborate.

So, of course, they were hit the hardest. Eaten nearly to extinction by the undead. What few survivors remained were taken in as refugees and excluded from any positions of power in the creation of Dragon City. They've never had a home in the city. No central organizations. No clans. Just a few scattered homes here and there, trying to hack it. They're usually not counted as one of the races of Dragon City, utterly forgotten in the margins of the slums.

As 7-foot-tall, thick-furred folk, bugbears are none too pretty to look at. They're more muscle and hair than bone and skin. And the fact they look so much like goblins isn't getting them into any even social clubs. A large number of the city's bugbear population doesn't even live inside the walls anymore. They hunt and gather in the hills immediately outside the Great Circle, bringing anything they find back to whatever little strongholds they've managed to forge for themselves.

Bugbears know now that they're tough folk. That they can survive among the undead just as well as among the living. The few that still live in the city work as mercenaries, doing contract jobs for Goblintown gangs. With their sunny dispositions, bugbears aren't exactly fit for the job of breaking legs—but it's work and they'll take it where they can get it.

MOTIVE: Survive.

ENVIRONMENT: Dragon City, inside and out.

HEALTH: 11

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 5 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth tasks as level 2. Frightening others as level 5. Lifting and throwing tasks as level 5.

COMBAT: Despite the name, bugbears are more likely to hug you than bug you, given you don't bug them first. Of course, if you do bug them, expect a disproportionate response. They're tall, and they're no strangers to a beatdown. Bugbears have the unfortunate fate of being stuck right in the awkward position between normal human strength and superhuman giant strength. They're strong enough to pick up a heavy crate and chuck it at a humanoid attacker, but not quite strong enough to just pick up the attacker. Non-mercenary bugbears rarely carry weapons. On the off-chance they ever get into a fight, they prefer to use any blunt objects they find handy. On a successful attack, a bugbear can deal a respectable 5 damage per hit, but that pales in comparison to what the largest monsters outside the walls can do, and the bugbears know it.

INTERACTIONS: Typically diplomatic, though if you see one in the village, armed to the teeth and walking your way, they're probably not in the mood for a chat. A bugbear living outside the city can be a

huge help when trying to navigate the local wilderness, but they rarely provide assistance without compensation.

Bugbears have always prided themselves on supreme politeness in everything. Not all of them live this way, but what little of bugbear culture remains focuses on an almost classical set of manners. If they're not out to kill you and you show up at one's house, they'll gladly invite you in as a welcome guest and even ask you to spend the night. And if they are out to kill you, well, it's just business.

USE: One day a mercenary bugbear turns up on the characters' doorstep, asking for help. Her daughter has gone missing. The little tyke wandered off somewhere into the upper half of Dragon City and hasn't been seen since. Normally she'd just go herself, but this is one place she's definitely not welcome. She needs someone who knows the terrain and the social systems in Dragon City's upper tiers to help her look.

LOOT: Most bugbears don't have a lot to their names, but they do have some basic necessities: a few coins, some hunting tools, maybe even a trinket. Usually you wouldn't find more than 15 gold worth of stuff on a dead bugbear, though now and again they have been known to wander into big money—and bigger trouble.



CREEPING CRUD ~ 1 [3]

Many of the old-world diseases died off when the population started being devoured en masse. The common cold almost disappeared, and many other communicable diseases vanished. Once everyone gathered in Dragon City, and real work could be put into developing magical treatments, effective cures were found for the few diseases that remained.

All except the crud.

It's more a parasite or a fungus than a traditional disease, but it looks like a rash, so few folks care. No one knows where it came from either, and people only just barely understand how it gets around. It starts with a patch of off-color skin, but it certainly doesn't end there. The rash expands endlessly, eating flesh and spreading throughout the body. You either burn the infected area away or end up a pile of pale red dust.

Obviously most choose the former, but depending on what sections of one's body have been infected, it can be dangerous to go in and start burning willy nilly. People regularly die trying to remove the stuff. On top of that, the crud doesn't hurt as it slowly nibbles at your flesh. Some opt to let the disease take its course rather than attempt any life-threatening, painful, and sometimes expensive procedures.

These are among the few bodies that never get sent to the morgue. The Imperial Guard burns them, often right along with whatever place they were living in. The crud spreads by contact. A pile of the red stuff is a public health risk the government isn't going to let rest under any circumstances.

The search for a cure for the crud has been extensive, but it's a resilient little thing. Burning is really the best option.

Expensive magical treatments can improve your chances of survival by hardening your skin and directing the fire in very specific ways, but nobody buys such treatments—at least, not officially. You'd have to be a wizard or an elf to afford them, and the upper classes of Dragon City would never be caught dead with such dirty, underclass diseases.

MOTIVE: Feed and spread.

ENVIRONMENT: Dragon City.

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 1 point.

MOVEMENT: None.

MODIFICATIONS: Immune to all physical damage unless physically cut away from its host, in which case it dies and crumbles to infective dust instantaneously. Resists fire damage as level 2. Resists all other magical damage as level 5.

COMBAT: The crud eats away at its victim at a rate of 1 point of damage per day. The victim can decide which pool this damage comes off at the beginning of any given day. This damage is cannot be healed, even by resting, while the victim is ill. Until the crud is removed, this damage counts as a permanent penalty. Fighting the thing is the hard part. The victim has to decide much flesh to remove, when to do it, and how much magical help or anesthetic they can afford.

Whatever flesh gets taken doesn't come back naturally. If a limb ends up getting removed, all future tasks involving that limb get two steps harder. If a limb gets heavily burned, or the crud is removed with some other sort of magical damage, all tasks with that limb are still going to be one step harder. If the crud gets on the face or chest, the same rules apply. But you probably won't want to cut your own head off, or use it for much heavy lifting, so think of the one-step disadvantage more in terms of future diplomacy rolls, due to scarring.

If you miss the crud on an attack roll, make one against the host as well. If you hit the crud, the host takes the same amount of damage as well, automatically. Make sure you get the host up to full health, as much as they can be, before you attempt removal. This can be a long and arduous process, and the host can die in the procedure if they're not in good shape.

INTERACTIONS: Diplomacy isn't going to do much good here.

USE: The Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard has been burning down minor apartment complexes in the slums of Goblintown. The official story is that these buildings were infected with the crud and had to be condemned, yet no one in these areas has reported a crud infection in weeks. All tenants were evacuated and relocated before the buildings were burned. If someone is dying of the creeping crud, no one can pinpoint them.

Yabair is obviously suspicious of all this activity, but he's far too busy to investigate it himself. After all, it's just a few ratty buildings. There's probably nothing going on.

He calls on the characters as a favor. Figure this out for him, and he'll scrounge up something in the budget to pay you all as independent contractors. Just be careful. The crud is nasty stuff.

Loor: A whole lot of ashes. If you can safely bottle up some living crud, it can be used as a biological weapon or poison of sorts.



CRUSHER ~ 4 [12]

Every mine gets abandoned eventually. Diggers become disinterested. Dwarves decide to turn back. Even the gaunt leave a lot of their tunnels to rot once the ore runs dry.

That's when the crushers move in.

Swirling, formless masses of speed and destruction, the crushers comb old mines day and night, picking up debris wherever they find it and absorbing it into their mass. Metals, liquids, people—it's all just fuel to a crusher. As they pick up more and more material, they multiply, expanding their influence outward and absorbing every stray pebble until the mines they inhabit more resemble smooth systems of tubes than professional workplaces. Some of the very first mines in the Mountain, dug some several hundred years ago, have been utterly cleaned out. Whatever history and relics there were to be found there, only rock remains.

Most miners don't mind the creatures. Crushers never attack active mining locations, so the mining community is inclined to leave well enough alone. "Must be the Earth's way of cleaning itself up," they say.

Naturally, some are not so happy with the destruction these little creatures

wreak. Powerful elder

dwarves—the Bricht clan

in particular—have

larger plans for their

old mining locations

and don't appreciate

the unapproved

modifications.

Whether it's for a

museum or for a

refreshed mine, the

Brichts have found

a reason to hate the

crushers wherever

they dwell. The

Dwarven Core

has designated

the study and

elimination

of the

creatures a

top priority.

MOTIVE: Eat, clean, and reproduce.

ENVIRONMENT: For whatever reasons, crushers never leave the mines from whence they are born. Within their tunnels they move about with reckless abandon.

HEALTH: 12

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 5 points.

MOVEMENT: Long.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 6 due to shifting nature.

Squeezing through tight spaces, restraints, and grabs as level 8.

COMBAT: Crushers never engage in combat so much as they bump into it. Crushers destroy anything that gets in their way just by touching it. Whatever substance makes up the body of a crusher has been imbued with some serious annihilation magic. Any creature caught in the path of a charging crusher must succeed on a Speed defense roll or take 5 damage as the monster attempts to suck the creature into its growing body. Any creature killed by a crusher is subsumed into the crusher's mass, never to be seen again.

Crushers do not actively pursue living things. After a creature comes into contact with a crusher once, they can avoid the crusher's next attack with a simple move action, letting the monster rush on down its merry way. Just keep in mind that at any moment, another one could be just around the corner. They



move extremely quickly and can squeeze into cracks and holes too small for most humanoids, allowing them to inadvertently blind-side any hapless adventurers who wander too far into their prowling grounds.

INTERACTION: If anyone has found a way to communicate with these creatures, they've been keeping it to themselves. Crushers seem almost mindless, what with the way they zig and zag about, ignoring everything but that which crosses their path. The complete and uniform destruction they wreak suggests some intelligence, though it may be in a sort of hive mind. For the time being, city researchers have only discovered a couple ways of manipulating the crushers. For one, the primary goal of every crusher is to crush. Throw an unusually dense object in one's path, and it stops dead to break the mass down. The Dwarven Core has authorized the use of Oils of Buoyancy and Floating Disks to move large boulders into the mines where crushers have most recently appeared, in hopes of slowing the rate of destruction.

Additionally, crushers seem particularly attracted to any objects infused with dragon essence. A crusher will go out of its way to consume a bottle of dragonfire, and using the illegal substance is the only known way of getting the creatures to divert from their random straight-line paths. The Brichts have not publicly admitted to using this method but, well, suffice it to say they are clearing crushers out of their ancestors' dearest mines suspiciously quickly.

USE: Lately the Hildebrands have come under a lot of scrutiny. The Dwarven family was once the most powerful and respected clan in the Stronghold. Their assistance in the fight against the Ruler of the Dead was crucial, and the Dragon Emperor acted to install them as the first leaders of the Dwarven Core. But now, after decades of Bricht rule, the family has lost more than power and respect. They've lost legitimacy. A lot of younger Dwarves question if the Hildebrands ever had it. "If they were supposed to rule the Core, where's the paperwork to prove it?"

Timo Hildebrand knows exactly where the paperwork is. His father, Gern, had the Certificate of Supreme Honor framed and placed above his desk. In his executive office. In the family's oldest mine:

Timo hasn't been inside the mine since he was a young boy. That was hundreds of years ago. Crushers moved in a couple of years ago and cleared most of the place out. Gern's office, however, was deep within the mine and heavily fortified. The certificate may still be safe. With this recent uptick in people questioning his family, Timo thinks a retrieval mission might be just the thing his family needs to turn things around. He'll pay top dollar for any group of experienced adventurers willing to escort him to his father's old office and back.

LOOT: Hard work and a quick sword can destroy a crusher, but don't expect a huge reward for doing so. The mines crushers prowl may still have some artifacts or cyphers hidden in their depths, but when a crusher dies it just fades away, taking all that it's consumed with it.

GM INTRUSION: The crusher latches on to a non-magical weapon in a character's inventory and consumes it, ripping open whatever carrying case or pack the character is using in the process. Until the character takes 10 uninterrupted minutes to gather up their things and make repairs to their bags, they can only access items which they already have equipped.

CYCLOPS ~ B [24]

There's an old joke in lower Goblintown about cyclopes that goes something like this:

Q: "What's the difference between a giant and a cyclops?"

A: "Depth perception."

Few of the people who tell this joke know just how true it is. To this day, a giant can still become a cyclops, with the right training.

The first cyclops crew was founded a couple hundred years after the rise of the Ruler of the Dead. The size of giants made them easy targets for the hordes of zombies roaming the wastes, and giants were considered far too violent and impulsive to ever be allowed a place in Dragon City. So, one day, a giant named Polyphem got it in his head that it might be a good idea to take to the seas and become pirates.

A small crew of giants built a ship, albeit a shoddy one mostly composited from old-world ships, and Polyphem was crowned captain. They roamed across the coast here and there—giants are not the best navigators—disembarking wherever it seemed safe enough to scavenge or to raid some old ruins. Over time, a cult of personality began to form around Polyphem. From birth, he had been blind in his right eye, so in an act of solidarity all his crewmates tore out their right eyes and donned eye patches. To this day, a cyclops initiate must tear out their right eye to become a full member. Ironically this act of bonding only made their poor navigational skills worse, but despite this the cyclopes carved out a sustainable way of life and even managed to expand.

Presently there's a whole fleet of cyclopes ships wandering around on the open sea near Watersmeet—directionless—looking for food and trouble. They're part of the reason few large-scale ocean expeditions have ever been attempted. The cyclopes pirates take down just about any boat that gets in the water.

MOTIVE: Survive, sail the seas.

ENVIRONMENT: Except on the rare scavenging or raiding expedition, it's odd to see a cyclops anywhere but on the water. They adore the sea, and any cyclops who spends an extended time on land eventually feels a call back to the brine.

HEALTH: 48

DAMAGE INFlicted: 8 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 4 due to size. Intellect defense as level 6. Destroys objects as level 10. Throws objects as level 6.

COMBAT: On land, cyclopes are formidable if straightforward opponents. It's a large part of why they prefer the sea. Like giants, their large hands and feet can strike multiple opponents at once. A cyclops can attack an unlimited number of creatures within its immediate range with a single attack action.

Cyclopes do, however, lack the giants' ability to pick up and grab opponents. Cyclops hands are too calloused from working on ships to grasp human-sized creatures properly, and their depth perception is so poor that they'd have a hard time accurately throwing any creatures they managed to pick up anyway. In a pinch they can throw objects smaller than a humanoid as improvised short-range weapons, but these projectiles deal only 6 points of damage. These combat disadvantages have led to rare scenarios wherein cyclopes have fled from raids back to the relative safety of their ships. They're

not easily intimidated into running away, but when confronted by a gang of powerful mages, or by a group of giants, even cyclopes have the mind to turn tail and run.

While riding the waves, cyclopes aren't a lot tougher, but they like to think of themselves as such. They're harder to get to, at the very least. Any Intimidation or Persuasion tasks made against cyclops on the water are two steps more difficult.

A cyclops ship holds 1d6+2 cyclopes: one at the wheel and one in the captain's quarter's, with any additional crewmates manning the crow's nest and other helpful positions. Cyclops ships are outfitted with old cannons looted from ruins and filled with small boulders as makeshift cannonballs. They tend to jam and backfire. Every time a cyclops ship uses its cannons, roll a d6. If the result is a 1, the ships' cannons fail. It takes 5 minutes of maintenance to get the cannons running again, something which a lot of cyclops ships eschew in favor of just boarding whatever ship they're fighting.

A ship's cannon barrage can attack for 10 points of damage from a range of 500 feet—and the attack hits all creatures within a short range of the point where it is aimed. A single barrage can often hit everyone on the deck of an enemy craft. Cyclops ships themselves count as level 10 creatures with 60 health. The cannons are all mounted on deck, and their bases pivot so they can be turned to fire upward at airships, although this rarely happens. Airships keep their distance from the ocean surface, rarely flying in range to attack or be attacked by cyclops ships.

INTERACTION: Years of interacting in small communities, raiding together, and figuring out how to sail has made cyclopes smarter and tougher than giants—in a marginal sense.

They're not great sailors, and they're still not great negotiators. Cyclops ships and raiding bands typically attack on sight, but clever characters could fool them into backing down. Cyclopes have notoriously large egos and huge soft spots for anything bearing the history or symbology of their clan—particularly Polyphem.

Use: An airship carrying Captain Yabair and several high-ranking members of the Imperial Dragon's Guard went out yesterday on a diplomatic mission to the Old Country. Approximately six hours after take-off, while flying over the ocean, the airship's primary navigation systems malfunctioned. The whole thing went down hard over cyclopes-infested waters.

Yabair and his men had magical means of communication, but none of them have been heard from since. The Guard's administration suspects sabotage. There are plenty of people who might want Yabair dead, including members of the Guard itself. With the specter of a traitor lurking in their mist, the Guard's remaining leaders have decided that it would be too risky to send out a contingent of their own on a rescue mission.

Looks like it's time for a contract job.

LOOT: In true pirate style, cyclopes like to keep their booty in chests. A typical cyclops ship, when cleared out, should contain 1–2 treasure chests filled with up to 100 gold coins, 1d6 cyphers, and a few artifacts.

GM INTRUSION: Cyclops cannons hit the characters' ship below the waterline. Water rushes in fast. A character must succeed on a difficulty 6 repair task within the next 4 rounds, or the ship sinks.





DEERLY DEPARTED ~ 4 [12]

When the undead marched upon the world, every species had to either adapt, get stronger, or die. Some did all three.

For the first hundred years or so of the zombie apocalypse, deer struggled to get by. Then, one day, there emerged a deer that was perfect for its place and time. One with antlers that curved outward and ended in sharp points. One with stronger muscles than any deer seen before. One immune to necromancy.

The deerly departed cannot be reanimated, and their tough hide is impossible for zombies to penetrate. They quickly outbred every other species of deer on the continent. They also skewered the reanimated dead and began using them as weapons against competitors and prey. The dead don't even mind, as they often get a bit of flesh out of every kill, and they can get around much more quickly riding on antlers than they can on their own.

To people living outside the Great Circle, these things are the bane of their existence. Beastmen hate no animal more. The deerly departed are happy to take food where they can get it, and if that means dining on humanoid flesh, so be it. What simple barricades the beastmen have are largely designed to keep deerly departed away from their encampments.

MOTIVE: Gather food and resources; avoid tougher, threatening creatures; survive at all costs.

ENVIRONMENT: Deerly departed can be found everywhere on the continent, but they tend to keep to fertile, temperate climates. Forests are their favorite hideouts. They need pretty good reasons to go somewhere like a mountain or a swamp.

ARMOR: 1

HEALTH: 12

DAMAGE INFlicted: 3–5 points.

MOVEMENT: Long.

MODIFICATIONS: Running, hunting, scavenging, and general athleticism tasks as level 6.

COMBAT: If a deerly departed thinks it can take on a character, its first move is to ram that character as hard as possible. As long as there are no obstructions in the way, the deerly departed can perform this attack at Long range, charging right up to their opponent and slamming them for 5 points of damage.

Of course, the charge is just to get up close, where the real damage is dealt. Against any opponents in immediate range, the deerly departed attacks by swinging its antlers about, dealing 3 points of damage.

Any given member of the Deerly Departed has up to two zombies impaled upon its head. These creatures function as level 2 zombies, though they have only 9 health and cannot move independently. Even if the deer itself misses, any zombies attached to its antlers still get to attack. Once the deer itself is dead, any zombies still attached to it are effectively trapped and can be killed with a simple action.

INTERACTION: If they think they can take you in a fight, the deerly departed attack you on sight. A character specialized in animal communication or handling can try to convince a deerly departed there is bigger game to hunt, but the deer are competitive and hungry above all else. Peaceful negotiation is not an option.

The best defense against the deerly departed is to appear bigger than you are. Deep down, they still skittish deer. If a character or creature can intimidate the deerly departed, it goes running.

USE: The Imperial Dragon's Guard has been mapping out the forests clustered around Dragon City for decades. It's one of Yabair's many pet projects: a map of the surrounding area that helps in anticipating zombie attacks. Plus—not that Yabair would ever tell anyone this—if the Ruler of the Dead were ever to fall, some accurate cartography would be a massive asset in rebuilding society at large, an asset the Dragon Emperor would have no control over.

A good chunk of this work has consisted of little more than digging up and piecing together old maps of the nearby land, but even before the dead came the mountains and forests of the surrounding area stood relatively unexplored. Reluctantly, Yabair has sent a few Imperial Scouts out to do the necessary mapping. Last night, the forest team never came back.

Yabair suspects that his team was overwhelmed by forest monsters, but he doesn't want to make too much of a fuss about it. If he sent out another team of Scouts to investigate, one of his superiors would no doubt start asking questions. He puts out the call for a team of skilled adventurers. Go into the woods, find out what happened to the Scouts, and retrieve any map data or survivors you encounter on the way.

Oh, and watch out for the deer.

LOOT: If the zombies are fresh, they may have a few silver left in their pockets. Otherwise, venison is a delicacy these days and goes for a premium on the open market.

GM INTRUSION: On a successful hit, the tip of a deerly departed's antler breaks off and becomes embedded in a character's chest. The chest wound bleeds that character dry—1 point of Might damage per round—until they or someone else can perform an Intellect task to apply first aid.

DWARVEN SURVIVOR ~ 3 [9]

As much as the Dragon Emperor likes to boast to the contrary, Dragon City is far from the last bastion against the dead. Countless people live off-continent. Wildlife of all kinds lives outside the walls, eking out an existence. The gaunt continually try to carve out their own settlement. And, of course, there are the dwarven survivors.

Even in the years before the rise of the Ruler of the Dead, dwarves did plenty of mining. Civilization required metals of all kinds, and the first step toward getting them was digging them out of the ground. Conditions in these mines weren't fantastic, but when the dead started walking, they suddenly became some of the safest places to be. For many of the dwarves far away from the walls of Dragon City, staying put in their hidey-holes and attempting to wait out the undead hordes seemed like the best option. Most of these folk died in the early days of the Ruler's rise, either by being torn apart by zombies while out scavenging or by simply starving to death.

A select few made it work. Those who live in the holes nowadays were either born underground or have spent so much of their lives underground that they do not know any other life. They have gone more than a little crazy, and anyone wanting to speak with these folks is going to have to go through a gauntlet of boobytraps first. Naturally, the Dragon Emperor has suppressed all information and discourse related to these outlanders.

MOTIVE: Survive. Keep the dead away at all costs.

ENVIRONMENT: Most of those who survived made it because they were somewhere up high to begin with. Mines dug in the caves and foothills of the mountain chain west of the city are the easiest to defend, but given the sheer desperation of these dwarves, there's the potential to find a small compound of survivors in any hill bigger than a sleeping giant.

HEALTH: 9

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 4 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Survival, stealth, and perception tasks as level 5. Defense against persuasion tasks as level 4.

COMBAT: Dwarven survivors, while not that physically intimidating themselves, have proven to be some of the most deadly and formidable threats to exist outside the Great Circle. It's rare to catch one scavenging above the surface. Most are completely consumed by the fear of outsiders threatening their home base, so they hide when above ground, and as soon as they are spotted, they start tossing knives and fleeing back to their hidey-hole.

Once a survivor gets behind their home defenses, good luck getting them back out. A character just trying to enter a survivor base must deal with spotting and disabling two to four unique level-4 booby traps, each of which deals 6 damage. Past that, in their living spaces, survivors have their makeshift barricades and weapons ready, giving them an additional +1 damage on all attacks and the equivalent of 1 Armor (with no penalties).

INTERACTION: Unfriendly. Survivors still possess their most basic mental faculties and language, but years of living underground and in small groups have hardened these people. A character who wants to speak with a survivor must succeed on a difficulty 4 Intellect task to even open a dialogue, and even then they

better have a good reason for doing so. Survivors are generally averse to coming back to society. Those that had their families with them when the dead started walking have nothing to go back to. The few who still have relatives waiting for them in the city may yet regard the whole idea of Dragon City as a joke—or, better yet, an elaborate lie concocted by rival survivors to draw them out of hiding. If you can find a way to recruit a survivor's help, they can be a huge asset in making your way out amongst the dead. Just don't expect an easy sell.

USE: Hundreds of years ago, Wilma Steinmetz and Gernot Bricht were in love. She was the prominent daughter of a major warband leader. He was an enterprising young entrepreneur. The Brichts and the Steinmetzes have always been notorious rivals, but these then-kids were prepared to finally bury the hatchet. Then the dead came.

It was presumed that Gernot died out at his dig site during the initial invasion, but recent reports have brought rumors of someone matching his description roaming the mountains out west. Wilma is the leader of her clan now, and she's happily married. Still, if the Brichts won't investigate these rumors, well, Wilma was never one to let an old flame go to waste. Of course, she'll need some help.

LOOT: Individual dwarven survivors are bound to have a few makeshift knives and a few old coins worth several silver pieces. However, dwarven survivor compounds may contain a few artifacts, plus mined precious metals worth several dozen gold.

GM INTRUSION: A character gives chase after a fleeing dwarven survivor only to fall into a concealed pit. The character must succeed on a Speed defense roll or fall into the pit, taking 8 points of damage.



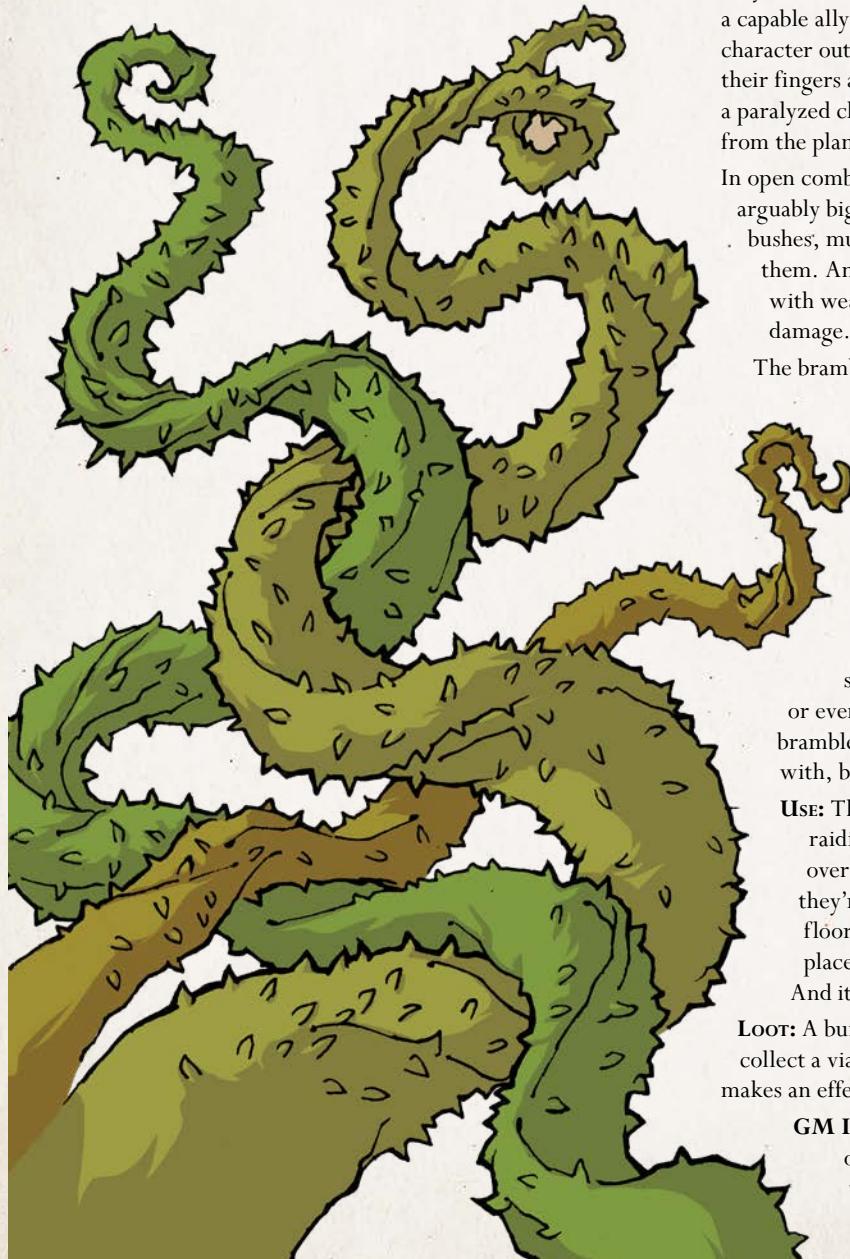
ELECTRIC BRAMBLE ~ 2 (6)

The dead have become something of a keystone species in the local ecology of the continent. A lot of old-world creatures have gone extinct, but a fair few have come to thrive amongst the dead. The electric brambles used to be a rarity, their numbers kept in check by the few species with the capacities to eat them. Now they're as common as dandelions.

The brambles aren't actually electric. They just feel that way. Their thorns secrete a strong neurotoxin for which there is no known treatment. People who come into contact with the bushes report symptoms including burning sensations, headaches, shivers, and heart stoppage. All say the initial touch is like a jolt to the nerves. The neurotoxin these things emit even messes with whatever magically-powered neural systems animate the dead.

As spiked, thorny, disconnected little bushes, you could easily mistake them for common vines from a distance. Don't.

MOTIVE: Survive.



ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere outside the Great Circle with sufficient sunlight, ruins and forests being the ideal places. It's not uncommon to find several patches of these brambles grouped nearby one another.

HEALTH: 6

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 3 points.

MOVEMENT: None.

MODIFICATIONS: Disguise tasks as level 4. Speed defense as level 1 due to immobility.

COMBAT: Electric brambles don't attack so much as they lie in wait and let you come to them. They are constantly in stealth mode, born to look like ordinary plants. A character must succeed on a difficulty 4 Intellect-based task to notice the bramble's tell-tale thorns. If they fail, there's a good chance they're going to walk into the bramble. Upon contact with the brush, the neurotoxin activates.

An affected character must make a Might defense roll or take 3 points of damage, in addition to an Intellect defense roll to see if they become paralyzed. The paralysis lasts for 3 rounds or until a capable ally performs a Might-based task to pull the paralyzed character out of the bush. A paralyzed character can still move their fingers and lips to speak and cast minor spells, but while a paralyzed character remains in the bramble they take damage from the plant—automatically—every round.

In open combat, brambles have one big advantage and one, arguably bigger, disadvantage. As loosely connected little bushes, mundane ranged weapons don't do much damage to them. Any ranged attacks made against an electric bramble with weapons like arrows and throwing axes do half damage.

The brambles are, however, extremely dry. They don't secrete anything save their defensive neurotoxin, and they suck up any water left in their presence. Strike a match to these things, and they light up like torches. Any attacks made against an electric bramble with fire-based weaponry, including flaming arrows, do double damage.

INTERACTION: The hallucinations from the plant's neurotoxin have caused some victims to report seeing the bramble's branches moving on their own, or even hearing the plant speak to them. In reality, the brambles are just mindless plants. They can't be reasoned with, but they can be burned.

USE: The characters enter an old-world castle on a routine raiding mission to find the interior mysteriously overrun with brambles. They're behind every door, they're at the bottom of every trap door, and most of the floor is just covered with them. Getting through this place is going to take more than a couple of firebombs. And it's getting a little late to just head back.

LOOT: A burnt bush yields no flowers. Still, if a character can collect a vial of the electric bramble's neurotoxin, the stuff makes an effective poison in more concentrated doses.

GM INTRUSION: One character gets their leg tangled in one of the bramble's twisted vines. In addition to taking 4 damage and falling prone into the bush, the character finds their Intellect defense roll increased in difficulty by two steps.

THE EYES ~ 1 [3]

Some of the Ruler of the Dead's best efforts in experimentation became spies. Some became fearsome warriors. And some just became intimidating showpieces.

The eyes belong to that final category. Fearsome creatures, a single member of the eyes consists of two concentric wooden wheels, bound together with dark magic and flesh, studded with reanimated eyeballs. They were meant to be a powerful psychic foe, but they turned out just looking real ugly. Whatever magic she intended to use to imbue the eyes with psychic power didn't take, and it turns out that necromancy doesn't strengthen wood. So the Ruler was left with a really scary piece of flimsy, animated wood.

She found a use for them—eventually. No horde is complete without a nice, intimidating figurehead.

MOTIVE: Obey the commands of the Ruler of the Dead.

ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere outside the Great Circle, usually surrounded by a horde of at least 5 to 6 zombies.

HEALTH: 2

DAMAGE INFILCTED: None.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Intimidation and frightening tasks as level 5.

COMBAT: The eyes can't attack. Not in a traditional sense. They're made of flimsy wood. Any attempt they might make to collide with another creature would hurt them instead. The only thing the eyes have to their advantage is that they are terrifying. Every single one of the eyeballs that stud the wheels making up the creature can move and stare independently. Couple that with the way the two wheels mesmerizingly weave in and out of each other, and the creature is just unnerving.

Upon coming within a short distance of the eyes, living creatures make an Intellect defense roll against being frightened. On a failure, they are petrified with fear and unable to move for 2d6 rounds. A frightened character can still accomplish some simple speaking actions, such as blubbering and crying for help, but otherwise they are helpless as the accompanying zombie horde rolls over them. After being frightened by an eyes once, a character cannot be frightened by that same creature again, although they may be frightened by different eyes in the future.

INTERACTION: There is usually not much time for interacting with these creatures. They're most often seen heading up zombie hordes, working as sort of a frightening buff for their undead companions. Zombies are slow, and the eyes work to slow down the living in turn. Despite their critical position in the horde's hunting pack, the eyes hold no special distinction among their

fellows, or among those that hunt them. In the rare cases where the eyes are left as the last living members of a horde, they give up. They are just intelligent enough to know that they'd probably go down in a single hit, so they never flee. They just stare down their pursuers and wait for the end.

Despite their relative rarity, more of the eyes have been captured than any other undead creature. Their inability to attack makes them ideal for study, and once one has gone inside the Great Circle, the Ruler largely abandons it. Since each of the eyes are potential spies, though, she occasionally takes back control of a captured set, just to have a look around.

A few particularly macabre wizards have purchased these creatures from the Academy to help decorate their towers.

They place the eyes in metal cages on raised stone platforms, just outside their tower doors, right next to the gargoyles and other pieces of magical flare.

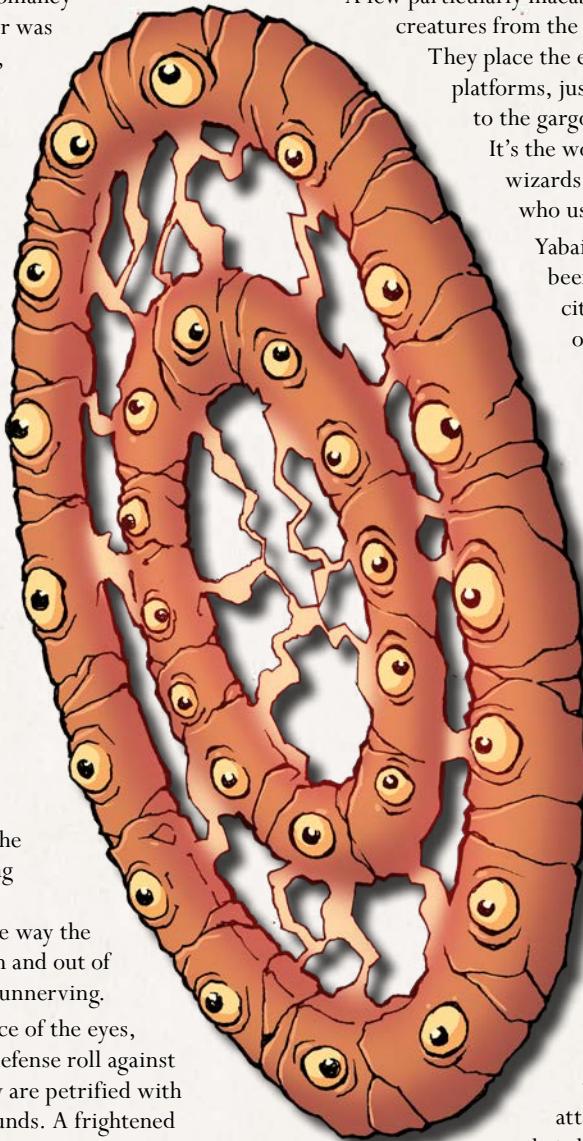
It's the worst kept secret in Wizards Way that wizards interested in necromancy are the ones who usually buy up these creatures.

Yabair abhors the fact that the Academy has been selling these specimens to private citizens. The study of necromancy itself is outlawed, so it wasn't like the Academy could legally do much with them, but Yabair is certain that by putting them in the hands of private citizens something will eventually go wrong.

Yabair knows that those captured eyes could turn back into spies at any time. The Ruler would only need to know which eyes to start controlling again and she'd have a damn fine vantage point from which to look down on everything south of Gnometown. Despite this risk, the Dragon Emperor has refused to outlaw the sale of these creatures. Yabair suspects that someone in the wizard community has been making generous donations to the Emperor's treasure horde.

USE: Panic arises across southern Goblintown as thousands of the eyes suddenly appear over the top of the Great Circle. The Imperial Guard attacks the creatures, only to find that their blades pass right through. Someone within the city is performing a massive act of illusory terrorism. The characters are called in to help calm down the citizens and investigate.

GM INTRUSION: The eyes pierce the very soul of a character. Rather than become petrified with fear, the character remembers the worst, most traumatic look they've ever received in their life and goes running. Roll a d6. That's how many minutes the character spends fleeing in frenzied terror. Only with the assistance of an ally, and possibly a good slap in the face, can they make an Intellect defense roll to break out of the frenzy.



FACE WORMS ~ 3 (9)

There are two things dwarves love in this world: ale and beards.

Or so the stereotype goes anyway. Dwarven culture is rich and complex. Dwarven stories and cultural contributions date back thousands of years, and you rarely find two dwarves that love exactly the same things. Still, beards have become an enduring fashion statement over the centuries, a cultural tradition among many families. It's common to see mature dwarven males with beards down to their knees, and it's rare to see one without at least a thick layer of stubble. It's said they have a knack for growing facial hair quickly.

They also have a knack for having it eaten off by face worms.

Measuring roughly 1 foot across and 1 to 36 inches long, the face worm is a parasitic slug that looks like a beard and likes to attach itself to the face of a male victim. It sucks its victim dry of blood then explodes in a burst of blood and hair, releasing several baby face worms who repeat the process with other prey.

Identifying a face worm isn't easy. The way they suck blood doesn't hurt, and they secrete a protein into their victim's blood that makes them ignorant and docile. By the time a victim notices something is wrong, they're often too weak to do anything about it. The victim's friends just think that their good pal has gotten a new beard trim and lost a few pounds—and maybe become a little more reclusive.

MOTIVE: Suck humanoid blood and eventually reproduce, hopefully without ever being noticed.

ENVIRONMENT: Potentially everywhere, though these parasites are endemic to the Stronghold. They tend to show up in waves, like a plague, spreading from one victim to another until they become such a problem that the Dwarven Core reacts.

It always happens the same way. The Brights, under public pressure, allocate Core funds to start prevention and screening initiatives. Over time, this brings the parasite infection rate down to such a level that the Brights can then justify shutting those same initiatives down. Later the parasite population resurges, and the process starts all over again.

Face worms have been known to attach themselves to people of all sorts outside the Stronghold, but those that do rarely last long. A 3-foot parasitic beard is much more conspicuous on an elf, and the Imperial Dragon's Guard has little trouble rooting them out.

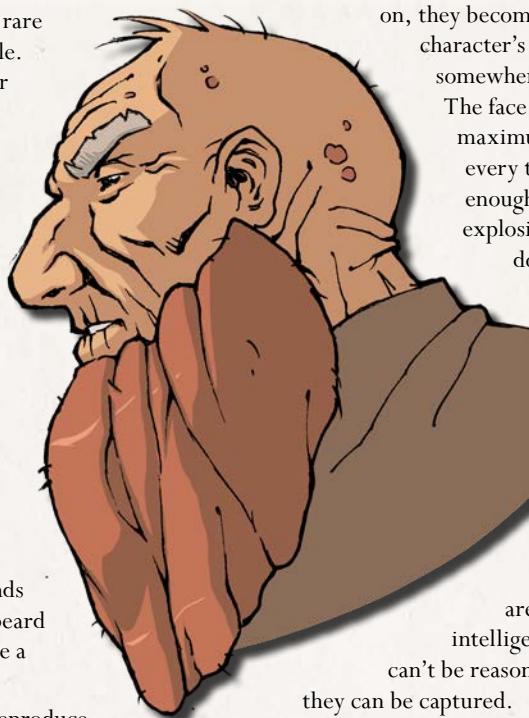
Some face worms still live outside the Great Circle, but they can't exactly suck the blood out of zombies, and a beastman is a lot harder to take on than a dwarf. Their best hope is to hitch themselves onto an adventuring dwarf that can carry them into the city.

HEALTH: 9

DAMAGE INFlicted: 2 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Disguise as level 7 when attached to a dwarf. Disguise as level 5 when attached to other humanoids.



COMBAT: Face worms are almost helpless in open combat. They are minimally intelligent, reckless, and not particularly strong. When caught and surrounded, they can do sort of a chomping attack with their sharp teeth, but it does only 2 points of damage, and they pursue their assaults to the point of suicide.

They kill best in disguise, slowly but effectively. Every two hours that a face worm is attached to its victim it decreases their maximum Intellect pool by 1 point. When that hits 0, the effect moves to their Speed pool instead. As this goes

on, they become slow and docile. By the time the character's Speed hits 0, they've wandered off somewhere private and fallen unconscious.

The face worm then depletes the character's maximum Might pool at a rate of 1 point every two hours till death. Often this is enough sustenance for the face worm to explosively reproduce, in which case it

does so immediately. In cases where its host is already seriously injured, the face worm may require multiple victims.

As long as the victim lives, the face worm can be removed safely, and the victim can regain any points they lost off their maximum pool totals.

INTERACTION: Face worms are named aptly. They have the intelligence and instincts of a worm. They can't be reasoned with, though with a proper trap they can be captured.

Interacting with victims is another story. The protein face worms pump into their prey doesn't change their victim's personality, but it is the equivalent of a strong narcotic. It makes them weak and uncommunicative. Any attempt to persuade or intimidate someone infected with a face worm should be 2 steps higher than normal.

USE: Your crew is contacted by one Heidi Gütmann, with a request to look in on her cousin, Barry Jaeger. The Jaegers have always been an outgoing, adventuring lot. Barry was born in Dragon City. He's just come of age, and he's been overjoyed at the opportunity to finally experience some of the world outside the Great Circle.

But a couple days ago he came back to the Stronghold looking a little strange. Maybe it was the way his beard was cut or his general demeanor, but he just didn't seem right. No one has seen him since this morning. If you could go check in on him, Heidi would really appreciate it. She's starting to suspect a face worm, and if that's true, there's not a lot of time left to save him. She's lost family to adventuring before, and she'll pay well to see that it doesn't happen again.

LOOT: Ironically the fur coat of a face worm can be turned into a great substitute beard or toupee. Worm pelts go for half a dozen gold on the open market.

GM INTRUSION: The face worm is startled by its victim and bites down hard. The victim permanently loses 2 points from their Might pool maximum due to blood vessel damage. These points cannot be regained, even if the face worm is removed.

FOLLOWER OF OGILI ~ 3 (9)

There's a small faction of people in Dragon City who still worship the Old Gods, the household deities that were prominent all over the continent before the Ruler came.

The Followers of Ogili are not those people. They claim to be, but the deity they worship—Ogili—doesn't appear in any of the old religious texts. In truth, the cult is a modern invention, an excuse for rich wizards and elves to get together and kill.

The faction is founded on the deluded belief that a mix of misappropriated classical rites and mysticism can defeat the Ruler of the Dead. They get together, kidnap some innocent orc or goblin, sacrifice them to Ogili, and then send a religious confession of all they have done—and all that they are about to do—right to the Imperial Guard. In the form of a riddle.

They're mad. Yabair considers the group a blight upon the cityscape, and he's managed to root them out a number of times, but within a couple of years they always reform. New robes, new symbology, maybe a new headquarters, but always the same MO. The current incarnation has gotten the hang of Yabair's tricks and has lasted half a decade. Recently Yabair has more or less accepted this stalemate and made hunting the cult down a low priority. After all, to his mind, they're just killing greenies

MOTIVE: Preserve the sanctity of the cult's traditions and appease Ogili.

ENVIRONMENT: The dark and hidden places of Dragon City.

Abandoned warehouses in Goblintown. Ornate secret dungeons built into Wizards Way towers. For special occasions they have even been known to arrange transport to old cathedrals outside the Great Circle.

HEALTH: 8

DAMAGE INFlicted: 3 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth, disguise, running, climbing, and jumping as level 5. Persuasion as level 4 due to religious zeal.

COMBAT: The cultists themselves aren't particularly tough or capable—most are elves or humans with basic combat training—but they are slippery. Getting a hold of them is half the battle. They prefer to stay concealed, and they're pretty good at it too. Even if you manage to discover a cultist, chances are they'll slip away to regroup with their fellows, at which point you're in for a harder fight.

If forced into combat, all Followers of Ogili possess a jagged knife they can use to make melee attacks against opponents, dealing 3 points of damage per hit. One in three followers is also a human wizard with a random cypher to wield.

INTERACTION: The process for entering the Ogili cult is long and laborious, and you must be of a certain social standing to even be considered. Followers of Ogili are devout, and persuading them to reject all that they've been brainwashed to believe is nearly impossible—weak links and new recruits being the possible exceptions.

If encountered out of their robes, most followers do their best to seem like charming normal folk. Keeping their involvement with the cult secret is a top priority, but at the mention of Ogili many have a hard time containing their zeal.

Use: One of Kai's siblings has gone missing, near one of the vicinities where the cult is rumored to operate. Kai is furious,

but he knows it's suicide to mount a rescue mission alone. He's not exactly on good enough terms with Max these days to ask him for help, so he reaches out to a local adventuring crew he's been hearing about instead.

LOOT: The average cultist has a couple dozen gold coins on them. A particularly prominent cultist may have up to half a dozen red-gold coins.

GM INTRUSION: When a cultist dies, they reach into their robes and press a button. A ray of blinding magical light shoots out at the character who dealt the killing blow, knocking them prone a short distance away and pushing them one step down the damage track. Creatures within a long distance take note. The follower and their robes dissolve in the process, leaving no evidence that they were ever there.



Giant Cockroach ~ 3 (9)

Dragon essence has a knack for getting where it doesn't belong. The city's worst-kept secret is that the Crystal River is full of the stuff. Speakeasies dump their supplies there to avoid confiscation when faced with a police raid, and any supplies a speakeasy does have confiscated? Well, they often go into the river too.

The pollution hasn't yet caused much trouble in the city, with one exception. The river spreads into a delta near the swampland around Watersmeet. Here the essence collects, causing some disturbing changes to what wildlife remains in the region.

Cockroaches are particularly susceptible to this rare kind of mutation. Imperial Scouts and adventurers have spotted cockroaches ranging in size from a softball to a large dog—all with glowing scales. While they range in size, these mutant bugs hold a few traits in common. They all have an abnormal, circular mouth on their underside, with multiple rows of teeth. And they all desire humanoid flesh.

Kids go missing in Goblintown all the time. It happens for a multitude of reasons, and the people going missing are rarely considered important enough to make the daily news. But ask around. There are more than a few orc and goblin families out there with horror stories of waking up one morning with an empty cradle where a loved one should be—and nothing but a few faintly glowing scales left behind.

MOTIVE: Collect and feed upon humanoid flesh.

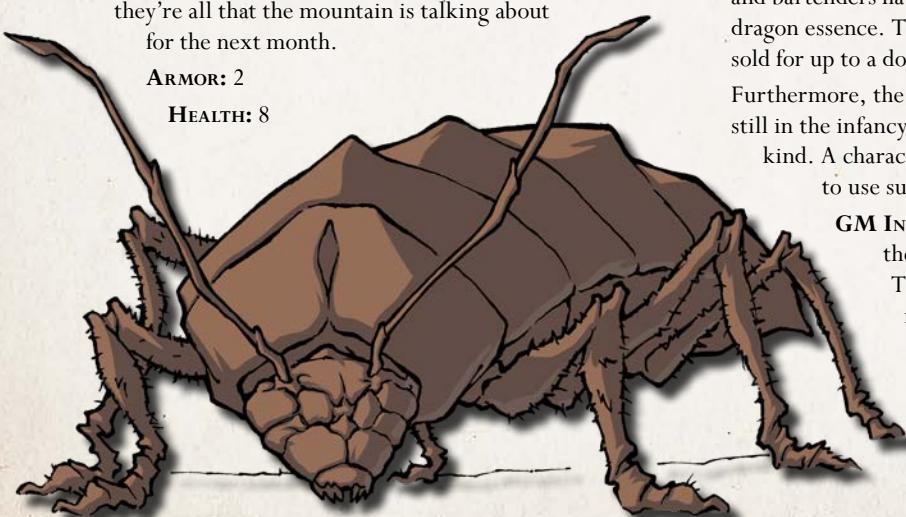
ENVIRONMENT: While they are born and dwell in wet marshlands, giant cockroaches roam everywhere. They quietly prowl the forests outside the Great Circle as much as they do their own home bases, if not more so. At night some enterprising roaches will try to climb up the wall into the city. The Imperial Dragon's Auxiliary Guard usually disposes of them with no issues, but every once in a while, one slips through.

They usually go no further into the city than Goblintown, grabbing whatever easy prey they can get their hands on and dragging it back to their home base for later feasting. A fair few have been known to stalk their way as far up the mountain as Gnometown, where the average height of the population means everyone is a potential meal. Reports of roaches in the Stronghold and the Elven Reaches are unheard of. The regions are too well protected and contain too little in the way of easy prey. That doesn't mean roach attacks never happen to elves and dwarves. But when they do, they're either covered up, or

they're all that the mountain is talking about for the next month.

ARMOR: 2

HEALTH: 8



DAMAGE INFILCTED: 3 points.

MOVEMENT: Immediate; short if the creature takes a round to roll up into a ball.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth tasks as level 2. Pacification tasks as level 4.

COMBAT: You might expect that giant cockroaches don't have a lot of weaknesses—and they don't. They have natural armor with no disadvantages. On top of that, their saliva is a natural tranquilizer, and their razor-sharp teeth rip through flesh like an elven dagger through a halfling honey loaf.

Speed is what brings them down. In their normal form, roaches skitter around at immediate speed. They can go a bit faster by taking a round to roll up into a ball, but this has its downsides, as it takes away their ability to climb walls and to attack normally. While in ball form, a roach can attempt to attack by slamming into a single opponent within short range, but even on a successful hit this technique only deals 1 damage. Exiting ball form takes yet another round to complete.

Roaches have the greatest advantage when they can catch their prey off guard. Any character bitten by a roach while unaware must make an Intellect defense roll and, on a failure, fall unconscious. If a character pacified in this way is smaller than an adult human, the roach tries to drag them back to its den.

After 24 hours, the roach begins to dine. Each subsequent hour, move the victim one step down their damage track.

INTERACTION: A character specialized in either intimidation or animal handling can try to restrain and capture one of these things if they spot it first.

USE: The elven Pagliacci family recently celebrated the birth of their newborn daughter. Last night, the happy couple went to check on the baby only to find the nursery window open and a few scales where the baby should be. With nowhere else to turn, the family reaches out, through a family friend, to a group of... undesirables.

The heroes are offered a large sum of money to track down the baby, with the offer expiring at the end of the day. Any longer and word will get out, ruining the family's reputation. Plus if the kid isn't rescued soon—well, everybody knows what roaches do.

LOOT: In the official records of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, giant cockroaches do not exist, yet somehow their scales fetch a fairly hefty price on the open market. Back-alley merchants and bartenders have ways of reconstituting the scales back into dragon essence. The scales recovered from a single roach can be sold for up to a dozen gold pieces to the right person.

Furthermore, the right mage would kill for a roach that was still in the infancy of its mutation, one of the rare softball-sized kind. A character with the right training might even be able to use such a creature as an asset themselves.

GM INTRUSION: In the heat of battle, the scales on the roach's back begin to glow blindingly bright. The characters currently closest to the roach must succeed on a Speed defense roll or go blind until the battle ends. While blind, all sight-based tasks that character performs are one step harder.

Giant Maggots ~1 [3]

There have been entire tomes written about the evolutionary trends toward gigantism in the era of Dragon City. With creatures like the giant scorpion and the giant snake, the theories are pretty straightforward. Being larger was more evolutionarily advantageous in a world in which zombies are actively seeking to annihilate all living flesh. Other creatures, like giant cockroaches, have slightly more complicated stories, but it adds up to the same thing. A combination of magical and natural factors produced an environment conducive to creating larger creatures with more offensive capabilities.

Nobody knows where the giant maggots came from.

Six feet across, drooling, pale, and lazy, no evolutionary benefits can be gleaned from examining a giant maggot. They're slow, they constantly need to feed to keep up with their giant metabolism, and they're amongst the most conspicuous creatures ever created. How they've managed to survive outside the Great Circle since their first appearance some decades ago is a complete mystery.

Despite the full resources of the Academy's War Research branch being intermittently poured into the project, nobody can even hazard a decent guess at what gave rise to this mutation. Initial theories included maggots feasting on necromantically enchanted flesh, but any such magical interaction should have just killed the maggots outright, not made them grow endlessly out of control. The Academy's mages have considered the possibility that the maggots have come into contact with dragon essence or discarded dragonfire, but that would also be curious as they don't glow and aren't particularly magical or hostile.

MOTIVE: Survive; lay about.

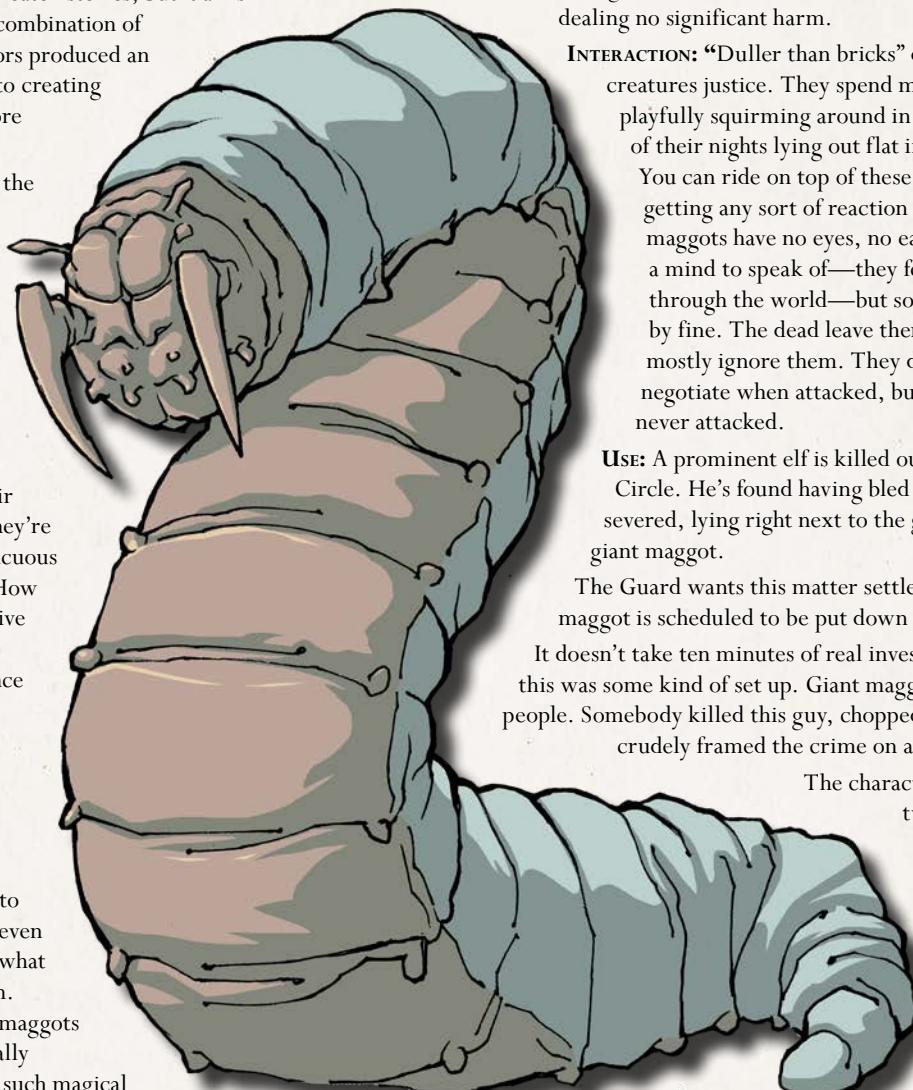
ENVIRONMENT: Maggots like to lay themselves out slack in the fields and swamplands surrounding Dragon City, where ever is the sunniest or the warmest at any given moment.

HEALTH: 2

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 1 point.

MOVEMENT: Immediate.

MODIFICATIONS: Cannot accomplish tasks that require stealth or acrobatics.



COMBAT: Technically giant maggots can make attacks. They have a small orifice that they can open and close at will about 8 inches in diameter on one end of their body, through which they eat food and secrete waste. If a character were to stick their hand in that hole while another character actively hurts or antagonizes the maggot, it could be goaded into closing the hole, dealing a point of damage to the character inside. Right afterward the maggot would, of course, stop contracting the muscles controlling that hole and release the character's arm, thus dealing no significant harm.

INTERACTION: "Duller than bricks" does not do these creatures justice. They spend most of their days playfully squirming around in the mud, and most of their nights lying out flat in grassy fields.

You can ride on top of these guys without getting any sort of reaction out of them. Giant maggots have no eyes, no ears, and hardly a mind to speak of—they feel their way through the world—but somehow, they get by fine. The dead leave them alone. People mostly ignore them. They don't fight back or negotiate when attacked, but they're almost never attacked.

USE: A prominent elf is killed outside the Great Circle. He's found having bled out, with his arm severed, lying right next to the gaping mouth of a giant maggot.

The Guard wants this matter settled quickly. The maggot is scheduled to be put down this afternoon.

It doesn't take ten minutes of real investigating to see that this was some kind of set up. Giant maggots don't ever eat people. Somebody killed this guy, chopped off his arm, and crudely framed the crime on a harmless animal.

The characters have only twelve hours to figure out the who and the why of this matter. Otherwise, an innocent maggot dies.

LOOT: Giant maggots secrete a translucent fluid

from their skin that keeps them moist for respiration in dry environments. Cut one open, and you find gallons of the stuff stored inside. Turns out that with relative ease the liquid can be converted into a combustible oil for lanterns and engines. This is a cheap oil that practically nobody uses—magical energy sources and other oils are far more readily available—but it is an oil nonetheless. Lucky characters might find someone to take it off their hands for half a dozen copper.

GM INTRUSION: The giant maggot inadvertently rolls over onto a character within immediate range. The character takes a whopping 2 points of damage as they are crushed under the maggot's squishy exterior and must succeed on a Might-based task to slip free.

GODEHAY ~ 2 [6]

Godehays are not a particularly popular pet among the people of Dragon City. They look something like a horrific mix of a triceratops and bulldog, so most folks instinctively steer clear of the creatures. It doesn't help that they breed like bunnies and that their claws are more numerous than their teeth.

Still, there's a certain sadistic kind of person in Dragon City who finds the creatures cute. Godehays are—to a certain extent—tamable, and some eccentrics have been known to keep them in their homes. They're popular among the Imperial Dragon's Guard and the Auxiliary Guard. Even Yabair had one once, though that lasted for all of two weeks before he had the creature thrown back outside the Great Circle.

The Emperor himself has mixed feelings on the creatures. To him, allowing such beasts to be kept in the city is unwise. He has permitted people to have godehays as pets, but he has also outlawed their breeding. Naturally, illegal godehay breeding has become a thriving industry in Goblintown. Selling the creatures to the rich is an easy way to make money and—ugly as it is—so is pitting them against each other on underground circuits.

MOTIVE: Depends on the godehay. The first priority of most is just to get fed, but with proper training their motivations can shift.

ENVIRONMENT: Wild godehays can be found in the forests outside the Great Circle.

HEALTH: 6.

DAMAGE INFlicted: 2 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Running, climbing, and jumping tasks as level 3. Perception and clinging tasks as level 4.

COMBAT: A wild godehay will attack on sight. A trained godehay will attack when ordered. Either way, the creature's strategy is the same. They charge at whatever they believe needs attacking and make a flying leap at whatever organs look the most vulnerable. Their razor-sharp claws are just as good at clinging to flesh as they are at tearing into it. If a godehay's attack successfully hits, the character being attacked should

also make a Speed defense roll against being clung to. On a failure, the godehay sinks its claws in, gaining the ability to attack twice per round until the godehay chooses to disengage or someone succeeds on a Might-based task to detach it.

INTERACTION: Training these creatures is a challenge. They eat any non-toxic food you put in front of them, but it takes a couple weeks of full-time attention just to get them to stop chomping your hands as you try to feed them. Getting them to obey simple commands like "sit" and "get" can take months in some cases. The worst-trained dog is never as difficult as the best godehay, but once the bond is strong and formed, it never comes undone. Godehay-owner pairs that have spent years working together gain combat advantages from their experiences. Such a godehay actually attacks as a level 3 creature with 9 health and 3 points of damage inflicted per hit. Its owner also gets a permanent +2 combat bonus against other four-legged creatures.

Catching a godehay is half the battle. They're smart little buggers, and if they smell a trap, they go running. The creature has to fail on a skill-based perception task before they even consider approaching a well-disguised trap, and if the trap isn't strong there's a good chance they'll bust right out.

USE: The characters' lead investigator is contacted by a human woman going by the name Ames Kearns. Ames has lived in Goblintown her whole life, and she has the scars to prove it. Years of adventuring have brought her a moderately better-off life, but she's still tuned in to the news on the street. Rumor has it that one of her old adventuring friends, an orc by the name of Kai, has been heading into the headquarters of a known godehay fighting ring in the dead of night, with his cousin Sig in tow. Ames is painfully aware of Sig and Kai's lack of forethought,

and she's worried that they may have gotten themselves wrapped up in something dangerous again.

She'd rather keep this matter a secret from her other old adventuring buddies, so she hires the characters to accompany her on an old-fashioned stakeout.

LOOT: Unless you have the things stuffed and mounted, a dead godehay isn't worth its weight in dirt. Capture a wild one alive, train it, and it can go for up to 100 gold on the open market. Even an untrained godehay can net you a few dozen silver.

GM INTRUSION: The godehay slams into a character's armor, tearing through it with its pointed horns. The attack does 4 points of damage and destroys any armor the character is wearing.



GREMLIN ~ 2 [6]

Ask any shopkeeper in Dragon City about their biggest maintenance cost. It's not inventory. It's not advertising. If you were really clever, you might get close with a stab at inventory loss and loss prevention, but you could hardly guess the cause.

Gremlins. Tiny, invisible, and universally terrible.

Despite common misconceptions, gremlins don't predate the rise of the Ruler of the Dead. The first gremlins were first spotted less than a hundred years ago, deep within the Stronghold. Their exact origin is unknown. Maybe they came from underground. Maybe they're a magical experiment gone awry. For all that science knows, they could be a long-lost cousin to elves themselves.

What we know for sure is that one day a dwarf saw a yipping shadow rushing down one of the Stronghold's major streets. By the end of the week, the creatures had so infested the underground that Dwarven Core meetings had to be put on hold until the problem could be sorted out. The yipping was too loud for anyone in the statehouse to think.

Standing only 12 to 18 inches tall, these little gray-green guys make poor fighters and negotiators but excellent thieves. The Stronghold eventually got their infestation under control, but only by channeling the majority of their pests out into the city at large.

MOTIVE: Survive, steal, and cause general mischief. They steal, they break, and they injure, not for their own ends but seemingly for the sake of chaos itself.

ENVIRONMENT: The streets of Dragon City.

HEALTH: 5

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 2 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Intimidation, persuasion, and stealth as level 6. Speed defense as level 4.

COMBAT: With nothing but a pair of tiny claws to aid them, gremlins are underwhelming in open combat. A single gremlin can make a melee attack on one creature within immediate range for 2 points of damage.

As such, it's not uncommon to see gremlins traveling in packs—often in groups of up to five—when committing acts of serious mischief. When this occurs, use the standard swarm rules to have them attack as a group.

The trouble with gremlins is finding them and figuring out what to do with them. They can turn invisible at will, making them formidable thieves to track down, much less hit. They never attack on sight, only baring their claws in the name of mischief or when gearing up for a fight to the death.

When caught by the authorities, they usually just turn themselves in. Their job is done. They don't want, use, or keep any of the items that they steal. They just stash them somewhere that the original owners would never think to look. It's enough to have simply subtracted value from the world.

INTERACTION: No one knows if Gremlins can understand Common or if they are even sentient in the way most humanoid creatures are. Autopsies on gremlin corpses have shown that gremlin vocal cords and mouths are capable of making the noises necessary to articulate words, but no gremlin has been recorded writing or saying anything in any known language.

Gremlins seem to be able to communicate between one another through a complex system of yips and yaps which, despite extensive research, has not been deciphered.

Use: Last night half a dozen extremely precious artifacts chronicling the fall of Watersmeet and the signing of the Dragon City Compact were stolen from the Imperial Dragon's Museum. Despite being vague on the precise details, these were some of the museum's most popular attractions. The newspapers are already claiming this as the next great heist of the city's most famous art thief, Killian the Black.

The characters are called in to investigate, but they begin to have other ideas. The heist was too shoddy to be the work of a master thief. Too many alarms rung and too many risks taken to obtain only a few items. The characters are just beginning research on gremlins when they receive a message. It reads:

Those nasty little gremlins stole my thunder! I'll give you twice whatever the city is offering for your assistance in getting it back. You in?

— KB

Loor: Gremlins like to dump whatever stolen goods they have on them as soon as possible, but one caught and defeated on the way back from a heist or robbery will have at least a dozen silver coins on them and possibly a cypher.

GM INTRUSION: Just as a character is about to slug a gremlin, the creature turns invisible and jumps out of the way. As a result of whiffing the attack, the character falls prone and takes 1 damage.



HANDY ~ 1 [3]

In the Ruler of the Dead's early days, she experimented with dozens of undead abominations. Some ran wild. Some were great ideas in principle that fell into piles of bone and flesh in practice.

Some were happy accidents.

A loose eyeball clutched in a severed hand got caught in a blast of necromantic magic, and the first handy was born. To date, these little spies are the best evidence any doubters have that the Ruler of the Dead is still out there. They show up in the city every once in a while. Sometimes the Imperial Guard catches them skittering up the walls. Sometimes they're crushed under dwarven boots at the Stronghold Gate. Other times they're discovered by janitors in the back closets and air ducts of important meeting rooms, having clenched and shriveled up, their mission accomplished weeks earlier.

These suckers are weak, plain and simple: a single blood-red eye embedded in the palm of a zombified hand. They can climb, they can claw, and with concentration they can even float a little, but any decent sword can slash through one of these guys in a second. Still, the right handy in the wrong place can do a lot of damage. They hear like dogs and see even better. Plans made in meeting rooms that aren't properly checked for handies mysteriously fail, their details forgotten as the planners themselves go missing. Not to forget the unfortunate case of the janitors who go to clean out closets a little too early and get their own eyes clawed out.

MOTIVE: Perform reconnaissance as commanded and controlled by the Ruler of the Dead.

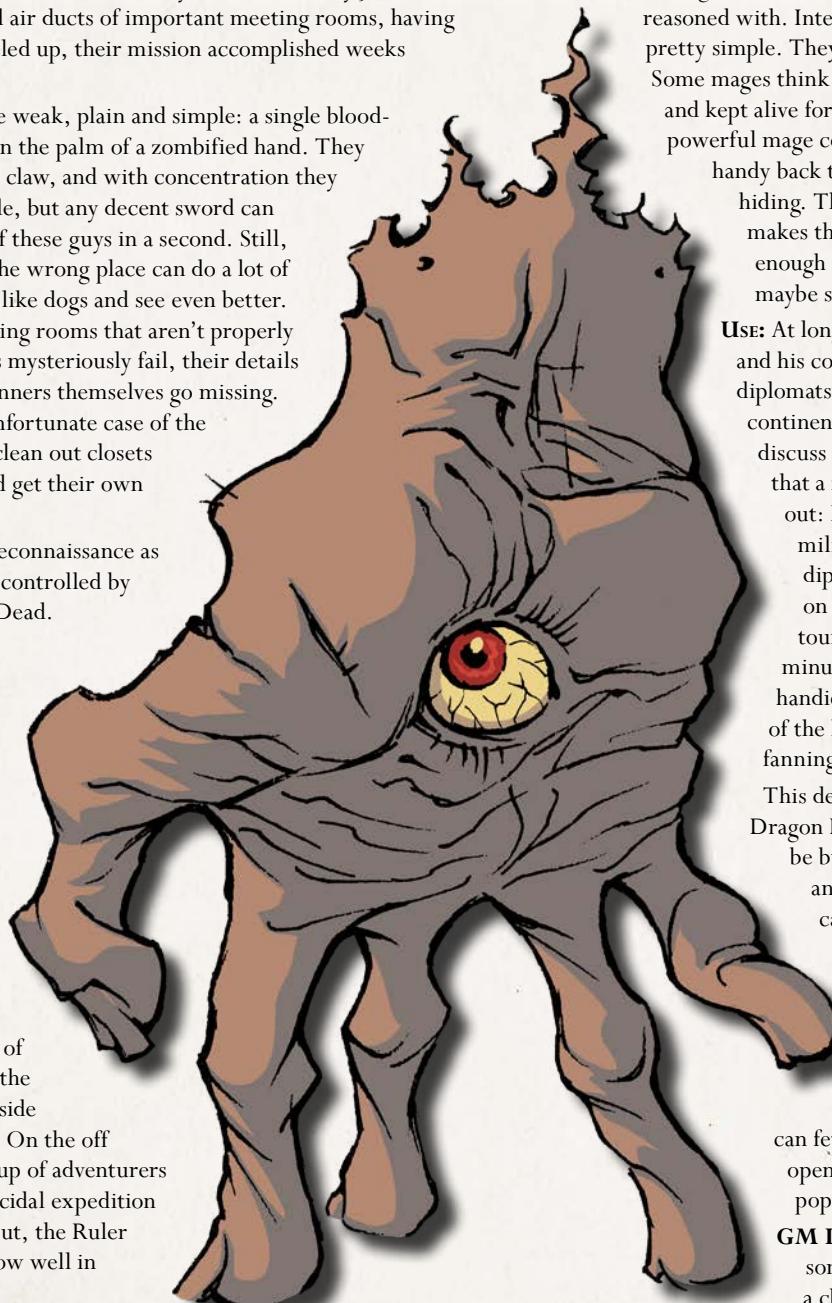
ENVIRONMENT:

Everywhere. Most often the Ruler likes to keep her spies focused on infiltrating high-level political organizations within Dragon City, but a fair few are maintained in the general areas of Goblintown and the Village, even outside the Great Circle. On the off chance some group of adventurers is mounting a suicidal expedition toward her hideout, the Ruler would like to know well in advance.

HEALTH: 2

DAMAGE INFlicted: 1 point.

MOVEMENT: Short while skittering or climbing; immediate while levitating.



MODIFICATIONS: Perception, climbing, and stealth tasks as level 4 due to agile nature.

COMBAT: If a handy still has work to do and thinks it can take on an attacker, it starts by launching itself directly at its opponent's eyes, attempting to blind them and create an opportunity for escape. But as they are often under the direct control of the Ruler of the Dead, they have a little intelligence and aren't afraid to flee at top speed when outnumbered.

If a handy has completed its mission or is somehow captured, it initiates a self-destruct sequence. No explosions or fanfare: the magic just drains out of it in 1d6 rounds.

INTERACTION: Through the Ruler of the Dead, handies have some intelligence, but that doesn't mean they can be reasoned with. Interactions with handies tend to be pretty simple. They attack, they flee, or they die. Some mages think that, if they could be captured and kept alive for even just a few minutes, a powerful mage could trace the signal from a handy back to where the Ruler of the Dead is hiding. The handy's self-destruct function makes this virtually impossible, but with enough leg work and clever thinking, maybe someone could pull it off.

USE: At long last the Dragon Emperor and his court have arranged for a few diplomats from the civilizations off-continent to come to Dragon City and discuss a trade deal. There's the hope that a formal alliance might be worked out: Dragon City technology for military assistance and loyalty. The diplomats are scheduled to arrive on an airship in two hours for a tour of the Dragon's Spire. Twenty minutes ago, a guard reported several handies swarming an exposed part of the lower Great Circle and then fanning out into the city.

This deal cannot go wrong. The Dragon Emperor and his top people will be busy meeting with the diplomats and demonstrating their military capabilities. As hired help, you need to ensure everything goes smoothly. Kill all the handies—or at least keep them from disturbing the meeting.

LOOT: A handy's red eyeball can fetch several gold pieces on the open market. They're rare but popular souvenirs.

GM INTRUSION: A handy overhears something about a weakness that a character would rather keep hidden. At the time, the character takes no penalties. But in the character's next battle against creatures controlled by the Ruler of the Dead, the information is exploited, and all the character's defense rolls for the battle are increased in difficulty by two steps.

HARPY ~ 7 [21]

Furies don't like to interact with their close cousins, the harpies. The Academy's mages can only speculate as to why. Maybe they're just too different as species. Furies keep to high altitudes, while harpies like to skirt just above the ocean surface, picking off fish as they leap out of the waves. Harpies look like winged, clawed demons, while furies more resemble graceful dove people.

But throughout all the studies the Academy has published—all the fieldwork that's been done, all the thousands of gold coins that have been spilled trying to understand the way these two species interact—there's been only one theory that has held up to observational evidence. The furies are an angry, insecure, and prideful people. They don't mess with harpies because harpies can knock them out of the sky little effort.

Harpies are some of the most vicious creatures known to exist outside the Great Circle. Get on one's bad side, and chances are you won't live long enough to get off it. Harpy claws are just as sharp as fury claws, and harpies are renowned for being the dirtier fighters. It's said that they can control the very wind with their intimidating battle cries. For the harpies, the undead are more of annoyance than anything. They were around long before the dead rose, and they should be around long after.

MOTIVE: Survive and defend their territory.

ENVIRONMENT: Outside the Great Circle, mostly toward the ocean where the winds are strongest and the fish are ripest for the picking.

HEALTH: 20.

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 6 points.

MOVEMENT: Immediate; short when flying.

MODIFICATIONS: Intimidation and persuasion as level 8. Speed defense rolls as level 8 due to nimble nature. Might defense rolls as level 6 due to hollow bones.

COMBAT: Harpies have a brittle bone structure, and their claws are no stronger than a fury's, but they can bat their opponents around like pieces of driftwood. Academy autopsies of harpies have revealed that some 50% of a harpy's skeletal structure is built to accommodate their massive lungs. On their turn, in lieu of making a normal melee attack, a harpy can choose to take a deep breath in and shout out a gust of wind at a creature within a short range. That creature, and any creatures within immediate range of it, must make a Might defense roll or be knocked prone and stunned for the next round. Characters and creatures hit by this attack within immediate range of the harpy get blown back even harder, being flung out a short distance from the harpy and taking 3 damage in the process.

Special circumstances can negate a lot of these wind attacks' worst effects—or exacerbate them. Harpies like to keep to the sea, and characters getting blown overboard during boat combat with these creatures is a real risk. Give your PCs a chance to grab onto the side of the boat with some sort of Speed-based task, but if someone goes over, they will have to be fished back out.

INTERACTION: Harpies speak a yipping, squawking tongue reminiscent of the one spoken by furies, but they are capable of learning Common. One in every four harpies knows enough to at least crudely communicate. They maintain a magnetic and frightening presence, but as long as no one is threatening

whatever feeding ground the harpy has staked their claims on, they should be kind and cordial. Harpies live a nomadic lifestyle, so they don't have much to trade. They're also not strong enough to transport characters long distances, but in exchange for a little kindness, they're often happy to accommodate friendly characters with a spot of fish and tea. Threaten a harpy, and that kindness can turn to hostility in moments. The only parts of these creatures bigger than their lungs is their fierce hearts, and they refuse to be intimidated or swayed without good reason.

USE: The characters are exploring outside the Great Circle when a harpy swoops out of the air and touches down right in front of them. Normally a harpy would never request help from outsiders, but these are special circumstances. Harpy scouts have been sent out to request aid from all friendly peoples in the region. For unknown reasons, an entire fleet of cyclops ships has recently begun infringing on harpy territory south of Watersmeet. The harpies are preparing an army of mercenaries to wipe out the entire fleet, no questions asked. You keep what you can loot.

LOOT: A harpy nest likely has an artifact or two lying around, lost by merfolk to the ocean's surface. Harpies have no use for them, as they don't know how to identify or use most magical items, but they won't part with them willingly without something in exchange.

GM INTRUSION: A character hit by a harpy's gust attack is blown backward into a hard object, clipping it with their leg. The character takes 10 damage, and until their next long rest their movement is halved.



HELL HOUND ~ 4 [12]

Hell hounds shouldn't exist. The Ruler of the Dead doesn't normally animate dogs. Turns out a zombie dog isn't that effective a fighter. A lot of a dog's attack power comes from the springy muscles in its legs, and once those have flayed away, they make for poor flesh eaters. Much easier to just let the wild dogs live, leaving something for the undead hordes to eat when humanoids are in short supply.

The hell hounds are a special exception. When the people of Watersmeet fled for safer ground, a select number were foolhardy enough to take their pets with them. A lucky few made it through to Dragon City, but most drowned beside their pets in the swamplands, becoming swambies. The pets in turn became hell hounds, fast and fiery flesh-eating beasts.

Despite the name, some of the hell hounds used to be creatures like cats and even gerbils. A combination of necromancy and swamp rot twists them all into the dog-like form they take in undeath. Untold barrels of ink have been spilled on why this form might be so effective, consistent, and aggressive. What is it about the swamp water that creates these unusually capable and magical undead creatures?

The Dragon Emperor has refused to provide much funding to any institution for the purposes of investigating the swamp. Furthermore, the Voice of the Emperor has publicly disavowed all rumors purporting that the swamplands were former nesting grounds for the Dragon Emperor.

MOTIVE: Unceasing need to burn and kill. As undead creatures they bend to the will of the Ruler of the Dead.

ENVIRONMENT: Hell hounds can appear anywhere outside the Great Circle where the Ruler of the Dead orders them to go. Sometimes they roam amongst zombie hordes as beacons, but more often they travel in prowling death squads of 3–5 hounds.

HEALTH: 15

DAMAGE INFlicted: 5 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Jumping, running, and general athletics tasks as level 5. Stealth as level 3 due to constantly emitting light.



COMBAT: Unlike swambies, hell hounds don't breathe fire. They exude it. Their eyes are fiery, their skin is burning hot to the touch, and their teeth feel like molten blades.

Hell hounds like to charge their prey, pounce, and bite. Whenever a hell hound moves on an opponent before attacking them, consider it a pouncing attack. The opponent must succeed on a difficulty 4 Speed task or be knocked prone, giving the hell hound an asset on its attack roll.

The bites a hell hound deals out aren't walked off. Just being close to a hell hound's mouth has been known to cause injury in folks with poor constitution. Every subsequent turn after being bitten, an injured creature must succeed on a difficulty 4 Intellect-based task to patch themselves up or else take 1 damage, ignoring armor, as their melting flesh burns away.

INTERACTION: Hell hounds are not the type for conversation. Like zombies, swambies, and most undead creatures, their motives can be manipulated to the characters' ends, but they can't be reasoned with. Stake a sheep in the

wilderness, and you might be able to lure one into a trap. Conjure an illusory threat or meal, and you might get them to go away. Show them a book on diplomacy, and they'll tear you to shreds.

USE: For the past few weeks, five or six hell hounds have been showing up in the dead of night to nibble on the edges of the Great Gate. The Brichts are confident their doors can hold up against any threat, even the molten hot teeth of hell hounds. If the infernal mutts weren't so insistent in their nibbling at the gates, no one would've even thought to take note. If there is any chance at all that these things have found some way to weaken the Great Gate, then this incident needs to be investigated to the fullest extent.

LOOT: The molten interior of a hell hound is so hot that whatever food once existed in the stomach of their former form has been crushed and reduced to pure carbon.

In older hell hounds, the carbon has been compressed so long that a few small diamonds can be found in their corpses, worth a dozen gold apiece.

GM INTRUSION: The hell hound takes an usually high leap and sinks its teeth into a character's neck. Instead of taking damage, the character is knocked one step down the damage track as they lose a large chunk of their neck flesh. They are immobilized and knocked prone as their jugular begins to melt away. If an allied creature does not perform a successful difficulty 4 Intellect-based task to stabilize the injured character within the next 5 rounds, they drop another step down the damage track. This continues until someone makes the roll successfully, or the injured character dies.

LEGION ~ 9 [27]

She'd never admit it, but the Ruler of the Dead was not always good at her job. The early days of the apocalypse were filled with bullheaded mistakes on her part, matched only by the errors of her opponents. Hundreds of years ago, zombie intelligence was of particular interest to her. If the dead could launch an attack without her direct control, the living would stand no chance. Thing is, most zombies have nothing but goopy gray matter slushing around in their heads.

The idea was to network zombie brains together. Maybe they still wouldn't be weapon wielding warriors, but at least they could act in concert on the battlefield. The experiment ran wild immediately and became sentient. It named itself. It didn't listen to any commands, and it escaped immediately. She tried this experiment a few more times in the following years, only to come up with similar results. Eventually she gave up.

The legions all stand 30–40 feet tall and can best be described as a horrible masses of dead flesh that have formed into orbs and grown equally fleshy and terrible legs. The body of a legion is constituted of hundreds of naked corpses, all of which seem to phase into one another as the creature moves. It has the intelligence of a hundred zombies and twice the hunger. It communicates psychically and operates independent of the Ruler of the Dead.

Nobody has seen any of the legions in decades.

A legion is the one undead weapon that could likely breach the Great Circle, but every legion is intelligent enough to know that with no backup it would be annihilated long before it got anywhere near the Dragon Emperor. For decades the legions have hidden themselves far outside the Great Circle, picking off anyone who wandered close. In the last fifty years, no one has heard hide nor hair of them.

It's possible the last few legions have gone into hibernation. It's possible that the Ruler of the Dead finally reined them in. It's also possible they've just gotten really good at leaving no survivors.

MOTIVE: Feed on living flesh.

ENVIRONMENT: Unknown.

HEALTH: 30

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 12 points.

MOVEMENT: Immediate during the day. Short at night.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth as level 2. Defense against fire as level 5.

COMBAT: While highly intelligent, legions aren't above being direct. For targets on the ground, a legion's first tactic is to stand above its opponents and slam its center mass directly downward. Because of a legion's massive size, this attack affects all creatures within a short distance of legion's center. Still, a legion's preferred method of attack is psychic. Any character within long range that a legion can see can be hit by the legion's fear blast, which deals 6 points of Intellect damage, ignoring armor.

INTERACTION: Legions communicate telepathically, and on the whole the few legions that are out there are very polite—right up until they eat you. A legion assures all creatures it captures that life as part of the hive mind is quite peaceful and contemplative. You may lose your body, but you join in an everlasting experience that is more than human. Of course,

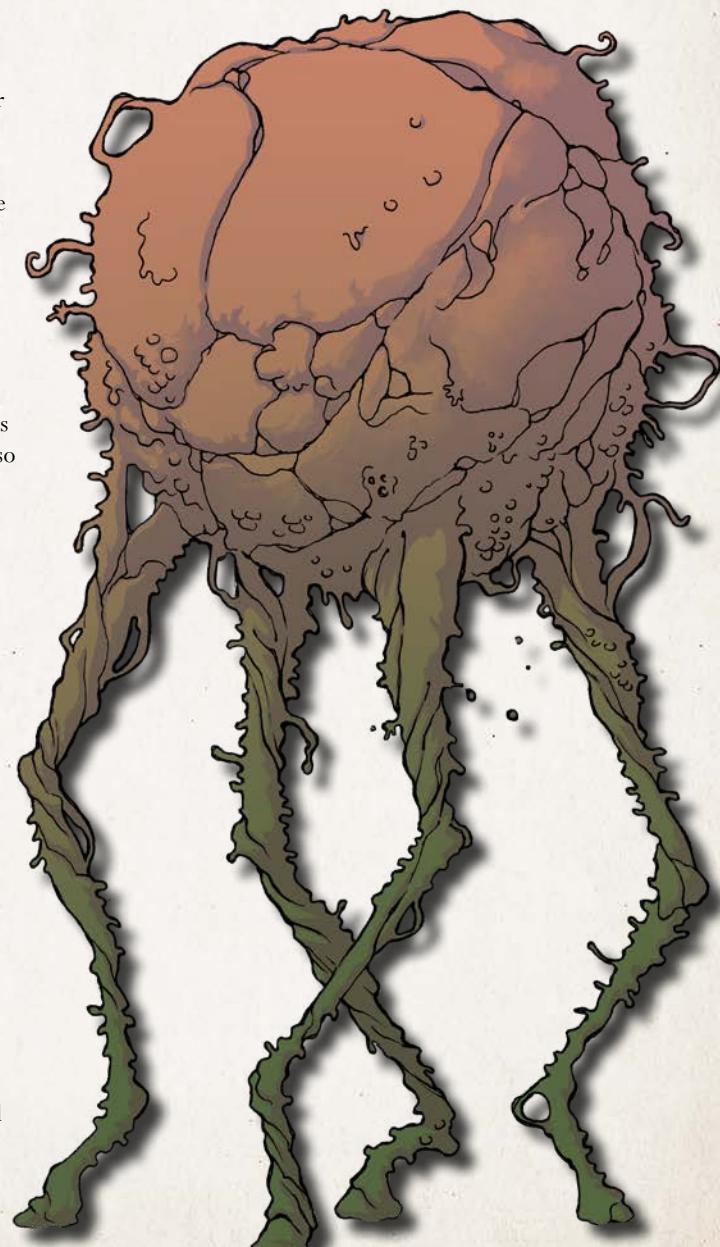
the legion fails to mention the eternal hunger that comes with all the so-called benefits.

Regardless, the legions like to think of themselves as generous negotiators. All the legions want is to feed on as much living flesh as possible, so if a character can cut a legion a mutually beneficial deal, the creature might be inclined to let that character go free—as long as they have collateral. If there's one thing a legion can't stand, it's a broken contract.

USE: Legions are versatile. The power legions have make them excellent bosses for the end of a campaign or a major dungeon, but their intelligence also allows for interesting roleplaying scenarios. Perhaps one day, a legion just shows up at the Great Gate, asking to negotiate. Information and assistance in exchange for flesh. You all do want to know where the Ruler of the Dead has been hiding all this time, don't you?

LOOT: Every legion has a few artifacts and cyphers built into its structure. It takes a lot of magic to maintain beings like these.

GM INTRUSION: Three level 2 zombies split off from a Legion's body and swarm one character.



LICH ~ 8 [24]

The Academy's ban on necromantic studies has stopped no one truly fascinated by the field. As much as the Wizards Council and the Dragon Emperor would like to control all the magic in Dragon City, unaffiliated practitioners still make up a good chunk of the wizarding population. And they, of all people, are the most interested in the forbidden magics.

The Ruler of the Dead's ban has been far more effective. Wizards who start seriously dabbling in necromancy rarely make it a week before getting a visit from the Black Hand.

Every once in a while, a wizard disappears from the city with some forbidden texts in tow. They take to the mountain caves or the inlets by the seaside cliffs—places outside the Ruler's information network—and they begin to study the art of necromancy.

The reasons they do this vary, but it all ends the same way. They get good, but nobody can get as good as her. Whatever skill barrier the Ruler has broken, nobody else can figure out how to crack it.

In the process of trying, most of them die. The lucky ones come back as liches: mad, undead shadows of their former selves, obsessed with understanding everything there is to know about necromancy. The unlucky ones end up as skeletal warriors in her army.

Either way, the living lose.

MOTIVE: To expand their own necromantic power.

ENVIRONMENT: Most liches keep to the place in which they died, attempting to continue their work by killing and reanimating anything that approaches their laboratory. Truly crazed and sophisticated liches have been known to go a step further, carving out entire dungeons from the surrounding rock. These places comprise some of the region's freshest dungeons. Most other ruins have something of pre-Ruler world about them. Adventurers are drawn to these dungeons like moths to a flame, often with similar results.

HEALTH: 30

DAMAGE INFlicted: 8 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Defends against life- and fire-based spells as level 4. Speed defense as level 6 due to brittle nature.

COMBAT: Bolts of necromantic energy shoot out of the lich's wand, striking a character within short range for 8 points of damage. Additionally, instead of attacking, a lich can cause a dead creature within their line of sight to rise as a zombie under their control, assuming that the creature wasn't undead already.



Liches collect cyphers habitually in order to assist in their studies, and they use them in battle—recklessly. At the start of every lich's turn, roll a d20. On a 4 or less, the lich reaches into its stash and activates a random Cypher from the Cypher Table. This could mean chugging a health potion while the lich is already at full health, but it could also mean activating a powerful Amulet of Defense right at the start of the fight.

Liches have trouble maintaining their undead minions. Every time the lich raises a zombie, roll a d20. On a 5 or less, the spell fizzles, and the dead creature instead becomes a level 4 skeletal warrior under the influence of the Ruler of the Dead. That makes it hostile to both the lich and any living creatures it sees.

INTERACTION: As crazy as they are, liches still have something of the old mage in them. An appeal to reason or logic isn't going to bring them back from undeath, but it may distract them long enough for a character to put them out of their misery. With a deep knowledge of the person a lich once was, an especially persuasive character may be able to break through a lich's madness long enough to get the lich to attack or disable itself.

USE: One of your characters spots an unusual notice posted on a board outside of the Barrelrider. It reads:

WANTED:

*ABLE BODIES CAPABLE OF RECOVERING
UNRELIABLE, UNGRATEFUL, AND STUPID
STUDENT.*

PAY IS 20 GOLD A DAY, PLUS EXPENSES.

— D. WU

Asking around, the characters find that one of Danto's students ran off last night with some of Danto's more illicit magical volumes. Chester Milton had always taken an interest in Danto's more unconventional teaching methods, and Danto is one of the few wizards in the city who is willing to discuss the necromantic sciences openly.

Under different circumstances, Danto might have just let the kid go—to Danto, a kid running into the wilds to get himself killed counts as a good riddance—but this one is personal. Danto has known the kid's mother for decades, a kind, sickly woman. Danto has seen enough friends lose children. He'll pay top dollar for anyone who'll help him track down Chester before the kid makes the next biggest mistake of his life.

LOOT: Once it's been cleared out, a lich's inner sanctum has about 1d6 artifacts and 1d6 cyphers lying in storage, along with a few trinkets and a couple dozen gold coins.

GM INTRUSION: The lich shoots a bolt of necromantic energy at one of its allied zombies, flaying the creature's innards and transforming it into a level 5 boneless. The new creature immediately attacks.

LURCHER ~ 3 [9]

Over the centuries, the merfolk have found plenty of reason to build defenses around their own cities. Dealings with surface folk have been mixed to say the least, not to mention the Ruler of the Dead remains a constant threat. If Dragon City were ever to fall, she'd be sure to set her sights on the underwater cities next, no matter how little of a direct threat they may pose.

But that's not why the merfolk began building the glass domes around their settlements. That's due to the lurchers.

The merfolk's best scientists have had trouble nailing down exactly what the creatures are. They seem to be just another rare oceanic species, as old as the merfolk, but their appearance is disturbing enough to have made them the subject of much study.

Imagine a bulbous sea urchin floating around on inky, ethereal legs. Now imagine that instead of spikes the urchin has thousands of blood red eyes. Now put the spikes back in and you might begin to approximate what these creatures look like.

MOTIVE: Feed.

ENVIRONMENT: The ocean floor.

HEALTH: 8

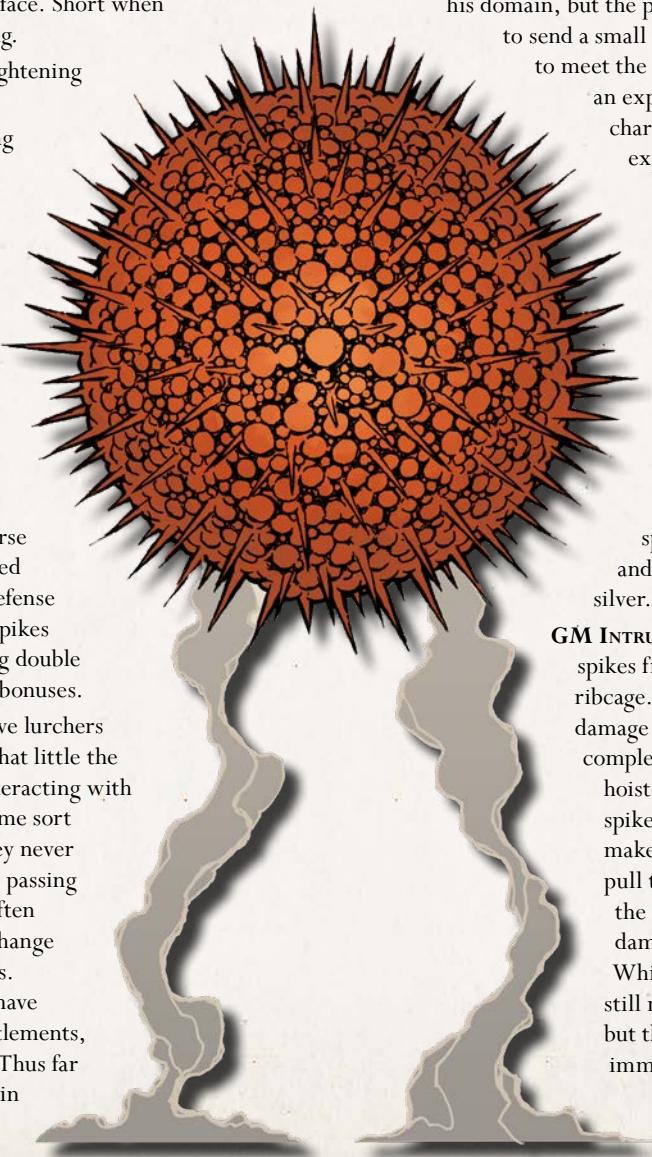
DAMAGE INFILCTED: 4 points.

MOVEMENT: Long on the ocean surface. Short when climbing, crawling, or swimming.

MODIFICATIONS: Perception and frightening tasks as level 5.

COMBAT: If a lurcher sees something it thinks can be eaten, it attacks on sight. Charge and skewer is the usual lurcher method. The various spikes and prongs that stick out of the lurcher's bulbous body can be retracted and extended to skewer at both immediate and short range, but with a charge attack they can do significantly more damage. And they move fast on the ocean surface. If the lurcher moves a long distance in the course of making its attack, make a Speed defense roll instead of a Might defense roll. On a failure, the lurcher's spikes completely skewer its prey, doing double damage and ignoring any armor bonuses.

INTERACTION: It's difficult to observe lurchers without being attacked. From what little the merfolk have seen of lurchers interacting with each other, they seem to have some sort of rudimentary intelligence. They never travel together, but two lurchers passing each other in the distance will often stop to face one another and exchange some short screeches and burbles. Large numbers of the creatures have congregated around merfolk settlements, but they never work in tandem. Thus far the domes have proved effective in keeping them out.



The merfolk have tried to make peace with these creatures, or otherwise tame them, countless times. Whenever the merfolk capture a lurker, it either breaks out of whatever cage they've got it kept in or it dies banging itself against the bars or walls, furiously trying to escape captivity. Certain spells have gotten lurchers to calm down and even obey commands temporarily, but it never lasts. They're wild animals driven by an unusually strong appetite.

Any characters ambushed by a lurker must make an Intellect defense roll against the lurker's frightening ability. On a failure, the target becomes frightened and must flee from the lurker at top speed for the next 3 rounds.

USE: A settlement of forward-thinking merfolk has agreed to meet with delegates from Dragon City. A formal treaty with even a small number of merfolk could mean massive trade profits for the city. Gnomish engineers have been looking into the concept of submersible vehicles. They're expensive and dangerous to move out to the coast, but a lot of folk are already being dazzled by the potential gold to be made. The dwarves want to open up underwater mines. The Sustenance Society wants to open up underwater farms.

Most people in Goblintown couldn't care less.

The Dragon Emperor is reluctant to even consider expanding his domain, but the potential is too tempting. He agrees to send a small number of Imperial diplomats out to meet the merfolk on their own turf, using an experimental underwater sub. The characters are hired as muscle for the expedition. They are to stay outside the sub, in diving suits, and guard against any dangers that show up. Cue a whole pack of curious lurchers.

LOOT: When killed, a lurker's eyes go dark and their inky ethereal legs fade away. All that's left of much use is the spikes arranged around the bulb. If carefully harvested and brought back to the right merchant, these spikes are useful in crafting spears, and ought to sell for upward of 50 silver.

GM INTRUSION: The lurker's skewering spikes find purchase in a character's ribcage. The character takes double damage (ignoring armor) from being completely skewered and is additionally hoisted up into the air on the lurker's spikes. Until another character can make a difficulty 5 Might-based task to pull the victim free, they are stuck to the lurker and take 1 point of bleeding damage per round, ignoring armor. While stuck to the lurker, they can still make basic melee and spell attacks, but they are otherwise completely immobile, and all of their attack rolls should be made one step more difficult.

MANDRAKE ~ 1 [3]

Adventurers are not seen as the type who enjoy salads, but most of them would take a bowl of leafy greens over a mandrake any day. These angry little pixies have a way of ruining whole weeks. At full maturity, they stand only a foot tall. With smooth oak-colored bodies and leafy little heads, they can look cute—from a distance.

Six hundred years ago, mandrakes were an annoyance. They were treated like weeds: dug up and cut down by the hundreds. Their shrieks are loud enough to cause hearing damage, so for up and coming wizards back in the day, they were a serious threat to an estate's property value. When the dead rose, mandrakes were relieved. Rotted hands and minds are not good at plucking them out of the ground.

The Ruler of the Dead figures that one day she'll get around to wiping the mandrakes out too, but for now she's happy to have the living alarm bells out in the wilds, working to her advantage.

MOTIVE: Survive and stay isolated.

ENVIRONMENT: Mandrakes like to make their homes about six inches deep into the soil of the woods and grasslands outside the Great Circle, typically in zombie-infested areas where they are the most protected. Their leafy heads protrude out of the ground, giving them photosynthetic sustenance and creating the illusion that they are just another uninteresting weed or sapling.

Breeding mandrakes inside the Great Circle is possible and relatively safe, if ear shattering.

The War Research branch of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship maintains a small population for study.

HEALTH: 3

DAMAGE INFlicted: 1 point.

MOVEMENT: Immediate.

MODIFICATIONS: Disguise as level 3.

COMBAT: The most a mandrake can hope to do to a lone opponent is scratch them. It's when their shrieking combines with the threat posed by other creatures that mandrakes can become a real problem.

Any character stepping within immediate range of a mandrake must succeed on a difficulty 4 Speed-based task or else alert the creature. Above all other things, mandrakes hate being disturbed, and they will scream endlessly at any character who fails this task. Their screams are high pitched and headache inducing. Characters within short range of the mandrake feel

like they're having their eardrums shattered, and the difficulty of all their tasks is increased by one step for the next ten minutes. Furthermore, the noise is audible, if harmless, to all creatures within 500 yards of the mandrake.

Depending on the circumstances, a lot of different things can happen when the mandrake begins to shriek. Any creatures who hear the mandrake's shriek are bound to come and investigate. When you're out in the wilds, this could mean allies, but more often than not, it means zombies.

When the PCs set off a mandrake, roll 1d6. On a 1, nothing happens. For any other digit, that's the number of zombies that walk out of the woods to join the fight.

The mandrake survival strategy typically involves sneaking away in the confusion, but given their slow speed and relatively low health, most are killed right after screaming.

INTERACTION: Mandrakes are easily upset and unintelligent, but they can be peacefully dealt with. As long as a mandrake is spotted before it is alerted, they can be avoided with no trouble. A risk-taking character can even attempt to uproot a mandrake they've spotted without alerting it. Failure means a screaming mess, but success can mean a valuable, sleeping specimen to take back to the city.

USE: The Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship has a problem. Their supply of mandrakes is failing.

Feeding and keeping the little buggers is hard, but up until a couple weeks ago the War Research branch had no trouble maintaining the mandrakes. At the current rate of failure, the whole mandrake crop will be dead within a couple weeks. The Academy has concluded that they just don't have enough data to determine what's going wrong.

Anyone willing to go out and observe mandrakes

in their natural habitat for a couple of days will be compensated handsomely. Any

live specimens brought back will be bought up for triple the normal rate. There's a lot of money in this job, and just as much risk.

LOOT: A live mandrake can be worth upward of dozens of gold to the right person. Unfortunately, dead ones don't go for anything.

GM INTRUSION: The mandrake fears for its life and lets out an even higher-pitched scream, drawing in 1d6 skeletal warriors.



MIMIC ~ 3 [9]

Ask any adventurer what their least favorite part of dungeon delving is, and chances are that dealing with mimics sits at the top of their list. The manipulative monsters hide in plain sight, swallowing whole any hapless person who has the misfortune to touch them.

Mimics came about long before the rise of the Ruler of the Dead. The story goes that a powerful mage once tried to animate some gray swamp goo into a living organism. Exactly why the mage did this is unclear.

Here's the catch with animation spells: the object being animated has to be sterilized of any macroscopic organisms. Evidently, this mage neglected a single chameleon egg mixed deep within the swamp goo. The resultant being killed its creator, fled into the surrounding area, and spent the following years learning how to reproduce asexually. The snarky shapeshifters have been a constant problem for adventurers ever since.

MOTIVE: Feed, grow, reproduce.

ENVIRONMENT: Potentially anywhere, though they prefer dungeons for the ease of access and increased tactical options. The few mimics who have found their way into Dragon City in the past were snuffed out quickly.

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 5 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Disguise, deception, and athletics as level 5.

COMBAT: Mimics feed by transforming into a common but desirable object and waiting for their prey to come to them. The structure of their bodies makes it impossible for them to accurately recreate the movements of a humanoid, though they can shapeshift into the shape of a suit of armor in a pinch. Treasure chests are a common choice, especially in dungeons, but they can transform into just about any inanimate object. As long as it's bigger than a bread box and smaller than a section of wall, the mimic can condense, expand, and recolor itself to fit the shape. There have been more than a few cases of adventurers reaching out to disarm crossbow traps, only to have their hands eaten by the trap itself.

Even with so many generations passed, mimics still have a bit of lizard in them. Once a mimic has tricked a creature into coming within immediate range, it likes to turn part of its body into a giant sticky tongue in order to better drag the poor victim into its gelatinous mass. It takes 3 rounds for the mimic to drag its victim inside, during which time the victim can attempt a difficulty 4 Speed-based task to escape, or one of the victim's allies can attempt to sever the tongue with a difficulty 5 Might-based task. Any minor NPC sucked inside the mimic should be killed instantly, while PCs should suffer 10 damage or be forced one step down the damage track.

Mimics who are detected before they can get off their sneak attack may take a different tactical approach. The mimic morphs into a properly offensive form, often that of a giant reptile. In melee combat, the mimic can only do 5 points of damage, but they're still vicious, nimble little suckers. Any character that falls prone during a battle

with a mimic is still opened up to the mimic's more vicious devouring attack, even after the mimic has entered into open combat.

INTERACTION: Any character who spots a mimic before it attacks can open dialogue with the creature. Mimics are surprisingly open to being persuaded, especially if a character has something to offer in return. Cyphers and flesh are their two favorite things to eat. The problem is that mimics are just miserable to be around. Centuries of living insular lives in dungeons have turned mimics into snide, snarky creeps. Even if they decide to let you go, they'll make sure you feel bad about it.

USE: A gnome at the Barrelrider is telling a tale that has people interested for once. The novice adventurer just completed her third expedition outside the walls. She decided to hit up one of the old ruins on the very southern tip of the mountains. It was one of the first ruins to get cleared out in the initial adventuring rush. This was just meant to be a practice run, a way for her to test her abilities: minimal risk, minimal reward.

Imagine her surprise when she got to the place to find dozens of treasure chests just sitting in the basement. Speaking to one another. Planning something.

LOOT: A destroyed mimic will likely have an undigested cypher or two lying in its remains.

GM INTRUSION: A character brings down their ax on the mimic only to receive an face full of tongue. The character is knocked prone and becomes immobile for the next two rounds.



OCUSAR ~ 4 [12]

Handies were an inadvertent success. Ocusars were a deliberate follow-up, an attempt to create an even smaller, quicker spy. The material had to be ocular, readily accessible, large enough to defend itself in a pinch, but tinier than a hand. It took years for the Ruler of the Dead to settle on the eyes of giants as the material to use, but once everything was in order, the experiment was an incredible success. In fact, it was too much of a success. A giant's eye sucks up necromantic energy like a dry sponge.

Ocusars make awful spies. The necromantic energy beams they uncontrollably fire out of their pupils tend to give them away. Being stuck floating about four feet off the ground is also a surprising obstacle to stealth. Ocusars have found a much more appropriate purpose in outright battle.

MOTIVE: Obey the Ruler of the Dead's commands; slaughter all life.

ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere outside the Great Circle, though they like to stick with other masses of undead creatures.

HEALTH: 12

DAMAGE INFlicted: Special (see Combat).

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth as level 1. Perception as level 5. Speed defense as level 5 due to size.

COMBAT: These guys practically leak dark magic. Firing a beam of concentrated annihilation energy out of its iris is an ocusar's standard attack. They can focus it accurately at any one opponent within short range, or up to two opponents within immediate range. Nasty doesn't even begin to describe how it feels to get hit with this thing. There's no physical damage, only the feeling of having your life sucked away. Any character hit with the annihilation ray must make two Intellect defense rolls. If either roll succeeds, the character takes no damage. But if they both fail, the character moves one step down the damage track. Characters killed with this attack simply dissipate. No corpse, and not enough ashes to hold a funeral.

Ocusars love to kill, and with all the magic inside them, sometimes they can't contain their excitement. At the beginning of each of the ocusar's turns, roll 1d20. On a 1, the

ocusar fires a stray beam at a creature other than the PCs. This could be an innocent bystander or even a fellow undead. NPCs and enemies hit by an ocusar ray still roll twice to defend, and they take 15 points of damage if they fail both rolls. Quite a few zombies have been accidentally blasted off the earth by ocusars who got a bit too excited.

This doesn't apply to the rare ocusars who are under the direct control of the Ruler of the Dead. Ocusars still work as magical viewpoints, so the Ruler occasionally uses them to remotely survey her troops or carry out a death order she can't trust to simple workers. An ocusar under her direct control can accurately fire its beam at a long-range target.

Ocusars have a backup attack in case their magic is disabled: the ability to whip their ocular nerve about and deal 3 points of damage to a single opponent in immediate range. When outnumbered and left with nothing but their slashing attack, they aren't above fleeing.

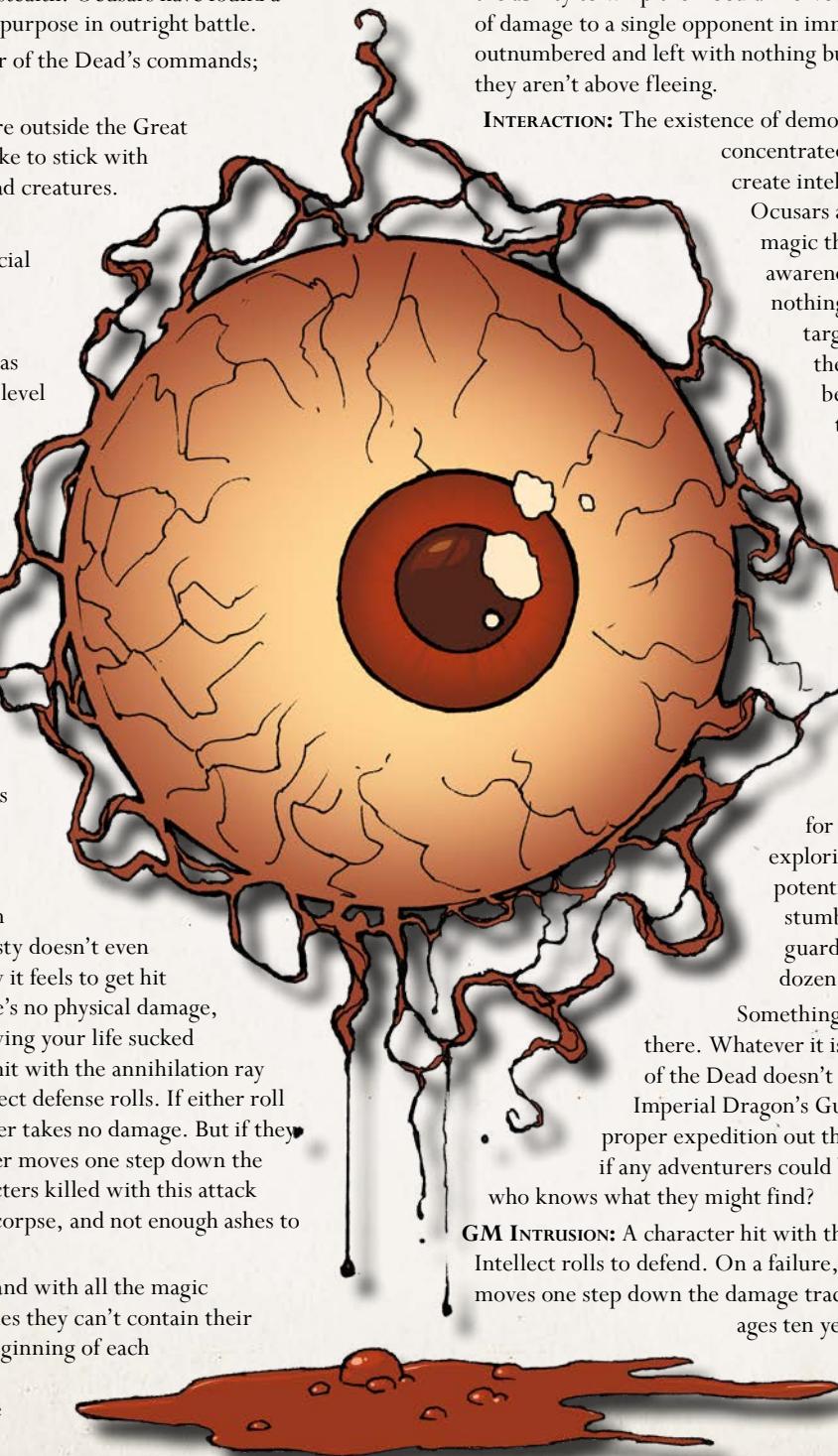
INTERACTION: The existence of demons has demonstrated that concentrated magic has the ability to create intelligence, even sentience.

Ocusars are so full of dark magic that they have some self-awareness. It's just that they do nothing but hate. Their favorite targets are whichever people they perceive to be the most beloved. They will flee if they see the opportunity to come back and do even more destruction another day. They cannot be reasoned with.

USE: The ocean coastline is usually pretty quiet. Not a lot of ruins to raid, and not a lot of dead to kill. A gnomish scout working for the Comforts Society was exploring the area, looking for potential farming sites, when she stumbled across a seaside cave guarded by upward of half a dozen ocusars.

Something is being hidden out there. Whatever it is, it's big and the Ruler of the Dead doesn't want it to be found. The Imperial Dragon's Guard will be making a proper expedition out there in a couple of days, but if any adventurers could beat them to the punch, who knows what they might find?

GM INTRUSION: A character hit with this attack still makes two Intellect rolls to defend. On a failure, the character not only moves one step down the damage track but also permanently ages ten years and loses 2 points from their Intellect pool maximum in the process.



POLTERGEIST ~ 3 [9]

It's a common misconception in Dragon City that poltergeists are spirits. This is not true, at least not in the traditional sense. Demons, angels, revenants, ghosts—these creatures are born when strong emotions draw out the natural magic that exists in all things. Poltergeists are born out of a glitch in the environment itself.

Sometimes the magic in a room just lines up. The energies in all things are constantly moving. There's no known thing a person can do to get those energies to line up perfectly—to make them conjure a poltergeist. Conversely, there's no known thing a person can do to prevent a poltergeist from forming.

These entities don't take human form. Someone witnessing their creation may see a glowing ball of translucent energy, but most never see them at all. Shortly after a poltergeist forms, it possesses an inanimate object within a short distance of itself and spends the rest of its life hopping from inanimate item to item.

MOTIVE: Cause general mischief and chaos. Disorganize that which is ordered.

ENVIRONMENT: A poltergeist can happen anywhere, though ordinary domiciles seem to breed the creatures the most often. They never travel far from their birthplace.

HEALTH: 8

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 4 points.

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth and disguise as level 6. Frightening others as level 5. Perception as level 2.

COMBAT: A poltergeist will attack you with everything that you own. Kitchen knives, furniture, even books chuck themselves at you in the poltergeist's presence.

In order to attack, a poltergeist possesses an inanimate object and then hurls itself at a single opponent within a short range. The poltergeist leaves its vessel the moment before it makes impact with its opponent, only to immediately possess another inanimate object within a short range.

Just keep in mind that special exceptions abound with these creatures. If all a poltergeist can find to possess is a fork, that definitely isn't going to do 4 points of damage. Conversely if the poltergeist possesses something like a gun or a magic ax, the attack it makes could do well more than 4 points.

Making any sort of counterattack against these creatures is a challenge. As creatures of magical energy, poltergeists take no damage from mundane physical attacks, half damage from magical attacks, and full damage only from magical weapons designed to slay non-corporeal entities like themselves. On top

of that, the poltergeist can't be hurt while possessing an object. If a character spots the item a poltergeist is possessing before the entity attacks, they can attempt a difficulty 3 Might-based task to destroy whatever item the poltergeist is possessing. A poltergeist forced out an object in this way is stunned, vulnerable, and visible for 1 round, after which it regains its senses and continues its assault.

INTERACTION: Poltergeists are made entirely of wild magic. They are not sentient in the traditional sense. They can't be spoken to or reasoned with, but they can be lured, taken by surprise, and even trapped, under special circumstances.

A poltergeist's only desire is to create disorder. Set up a stack of cans or a house of cards nearby the poltergeist's prowling grounds, and it'll come running right into whatever magical circle of entrapment you've got waiting for it.

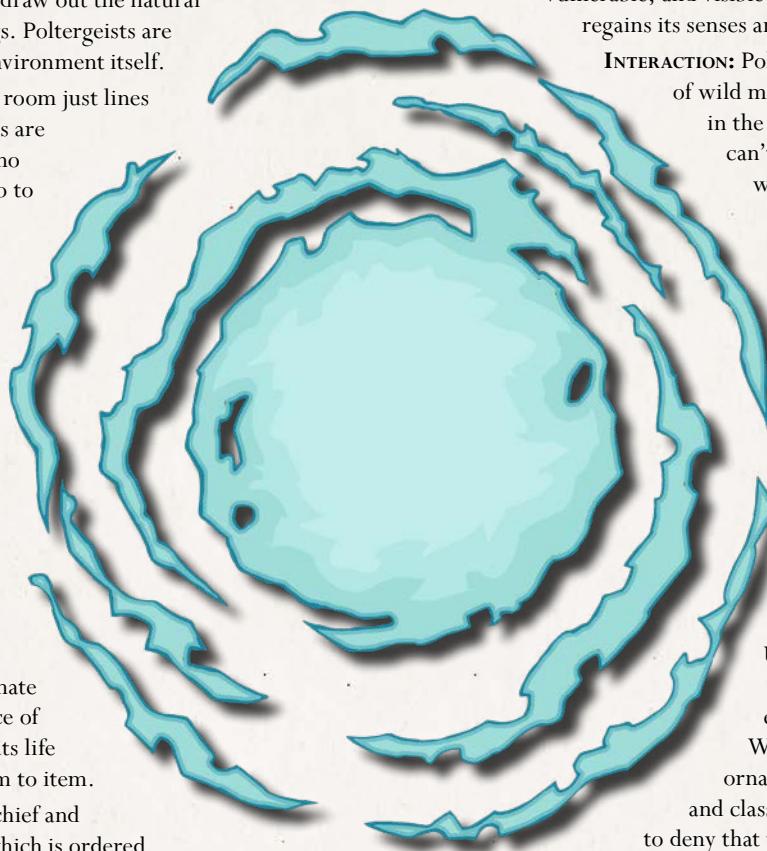
USE: Marceau Prescott doesn't own the most prestigious or expensive tower in Wizards Way, but he may own the most ornate. All red carpets, gargoyles, and classic paintings, it's impossible to deny that the place exudes a certain, overdone attempt at class.

Tonight is supposed to be the grand unveiling of Prescott's most valuable art piece yet—*The Great Emperor's Victory*—a massive mural designed to dominate the ceiling of his grand ballroom. However, this morning Marceau opened up his wine cellar to find the interior completely destroyed: barrels overturned, boxes broken, not a single wine rack spared.

Marceau suspects his house has been invaded by a poltergeist—possibly several. He hires the characters for one purpose: rooting these creatures out before the unveiling tonight. The Prescott family has a lot of power in this part of town, so if the new installment is damaged in any way—if any poltergeists survive, or if any evidence of damage remains in the Grand Ballroom when the gala starts—there'll be hell to pay.

LOOT: When killed, a poltergeist fades away in a flash of light. These creatures leave no remains, though there are plenty of wealthy patrons who would be ready to pay top dollar to have their estates preserved from supernatural destruction.

GM INTRUSION: The poltergeist possesses an item of powerful sentimental value to a character and attempts to slaughter them with it. This could mean possessing their grandmother's pendant and jumping down the character's throat, or it could mean grabbing an ax that belonged to a character's legendary ancestor and smashing them in the face with it. Due to the character being caught off guard, this is the equivalent of a level 5 attack that does 8 damage if it hits.



PSYFOX ~ 3 (9)

The gaunt don't tend to find much on their long excursions under Dragon Mountain. A vein of ore here, a cave system there. They take advantage of what they can, and they deal with all the rest.

Psyfoxes are something they dug up one day, deep beneath the mountain. One gaunt scout ventured a little too deep into a cave system that hadn't been explored before, and there it was. Squeezed right between a stalagmite and quartz deposit. Staring back at the scout with two beady little eyes.

The name *psyfox* is an informal and extremely incongruous title. They are psychic, and they do resemble foxes, but only in the vaguest sense. Size wise they stand closer to the height of a large dog than any sort of fox, and unlike any sort of mammal, they have no hair or reproductive organs whatsoever. Just a coat of thin, flexible, silvery crystals.

MOTIVE: Poorly understood. Psyfoxes like to steal shiny objects, mess with gaunt operations, and defend their dens, which lie in the lowest cave systems beneath Dragon Mountain.

ENVIRONMENT: Psyfoxes prefer to keep to the their dens beneath the mountain, but it's not unknown for one to venture miles outward. Seeing one in Dragon City itself is rare, though from time to time one or two have been known to accidentally wander into the Stronghold from some hidden gaunt tunnel. The gaunt despise psyfoxes for their habit of sneaking into underground gaunt encampments and stealing important equipment.

HEALTH: 8.

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 3 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Running, jumping, climbing, and general athleticism tasks as level 5. Intellect defense as level 4. Intimidation and persuasion as level 4. Takes half damage from all magical attacks due to reflective nature of its coat.

COMBAT: With razor-sharp crystal teeth and hair, psyfoxes are formidable opponents. As a ranged attack, they can pick one opponent within short range and launch a psychic assault. The opponent must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or take 2 points of damage.

Although, for the most part, psyfoxes prefer to handle combat the old-fashioned way. As a melee attack, they can bite an enemy within immediate distance, dealing 3 points of damage. Any opponent attempting to retaliate against a psyfox in melee automatically takes 1 point of damage due to getting caught up in their fur.

A decent ax and set of armor can ameliorate most of these problems, including the psyfox's partial immunity to magical damage, but most gaunt don't have that kind of equipment on hand. In

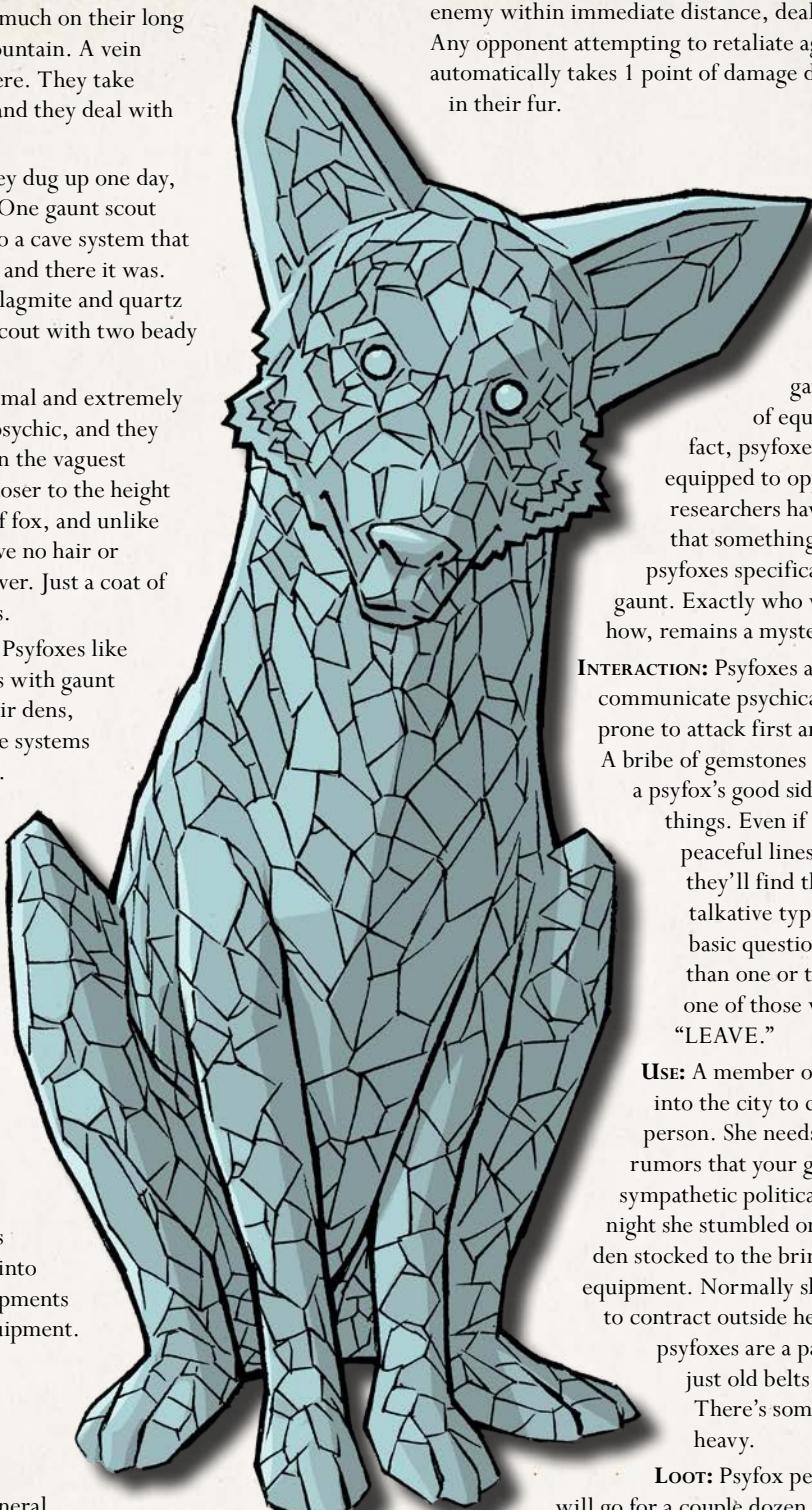
fact, psyfoxes are so curiously well equipped to oppose the gaunt that some researchers have posited the theory that something must have created the psyfoxes specifically to mess with the gaunt. Exactly who would do that, why, or how, remains a mystery.

INTERACTION: Psyfoxes are intelligent can communicate psychically, though they're prone to attack first and ask questions later. A bribe of gemstones is a fine way to get on a psyfox's good side. They love to eat the things. Even if a character can open peaceful lines of communication, they'll find that psyfoxes aren't the talkative type. The creatures answer basic questions, but rarely with more than one or two words. Eventually, one of those words is going to be, "LEAVE."

USE: A member of the gaunt risks the trek into the city to contact the characters in person. She needs help, and she's heard rumors that your group may have some sympathetic political leanings. The other night she stumbled onto a massive psyfox den stocked to the brim with stolen gaunt equipment. Normally she wouldn't ever try to contract outside help like this, but the psyfoxes are a pain to fight—and it's not just old belts and cyphers in that cave. There's something big. Something heavy.

LOOT: Psyfox pelts, sharp as they are, will go for a couple dozen silver on the black market. Certain smiths like to buy them up for use in premium, magic-resistant armor pieces. A larger group of several psyfoxes are also likely to have a den nearby with a few stolen cyphers lying around.

GM INTRUSION: The psyfox zeroes in on a character that it finds to be particularly threatening and lets loose a psychic scream. On a failed Intellect defense roll, the affected character takes 6 damage and flings themselves prone from the agony of the noise.



ROCK MAGGOTS ~ 2 [6]

Some pests drink blood, some eat wood, and some eat flesh, but few eat solid rock. The rock maggots are unique among the macroscopic species of the continent in that they can directly turn minerals into nutrients. No one knows precisely how they do this—being so small, their digestive system seems too simple to accomplish such a task—and yet they eat. If you ever see pockmarks in the middle of a cliff side, or notice some strange, Swiss cheese-like holes in rocks along the river bed, that's the rock maggots at work.

Most annoyingly, they love to eat away at the stone that makes up the Great Circle. Ever since its foundation, the Great Circle has had problems with rock maggot infestations. Every time it looks like Pest Control has wiped out the buggers, a new part of the wall becomes compromised overnight.

Rumors of sabotage from within Dragon City have abounded for decades. After all, the Brichts get a big payday every time the Emperor's office has to send down to the Stronghold to get replacement sections cut for the Great Circle. A lot of other dwarven clans could stand to benefit too, either indirectly from the Brichts' success or from eventually seeing the Brichts fall, framed for the rock maggot problems. Regardless of these theories, no one has proven anything. Yet.

MOTIVE: Feed.

ENVIRONMENT: Places of high stone and mineral concentration.

They are aerobic creatures, so with the exception of caves it's rare to see them far underground.

HEALTH: 5

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 2 points.

MOVEMENT: Immediate.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed and Might defense as level 4 against attacks that target only one creature at a time. Speed and Might defense as level 1 against area of effect and fire attacks. Climbing and leaping tasks as level 3.

COMBAT: Rock maggots prefer rock, but they are vicious little pests who are perfectly capable of eating through armor and flesh without provocation. On armored opponents, they take the time to destroy the armor—which they seem to find tasty—before they attack their opponent directly. They eat through 1 point of Armor per round. Armor that has only been partially eaten through may be repaired by a smith later, but armor reduced to 0 points is destroyed permanently.

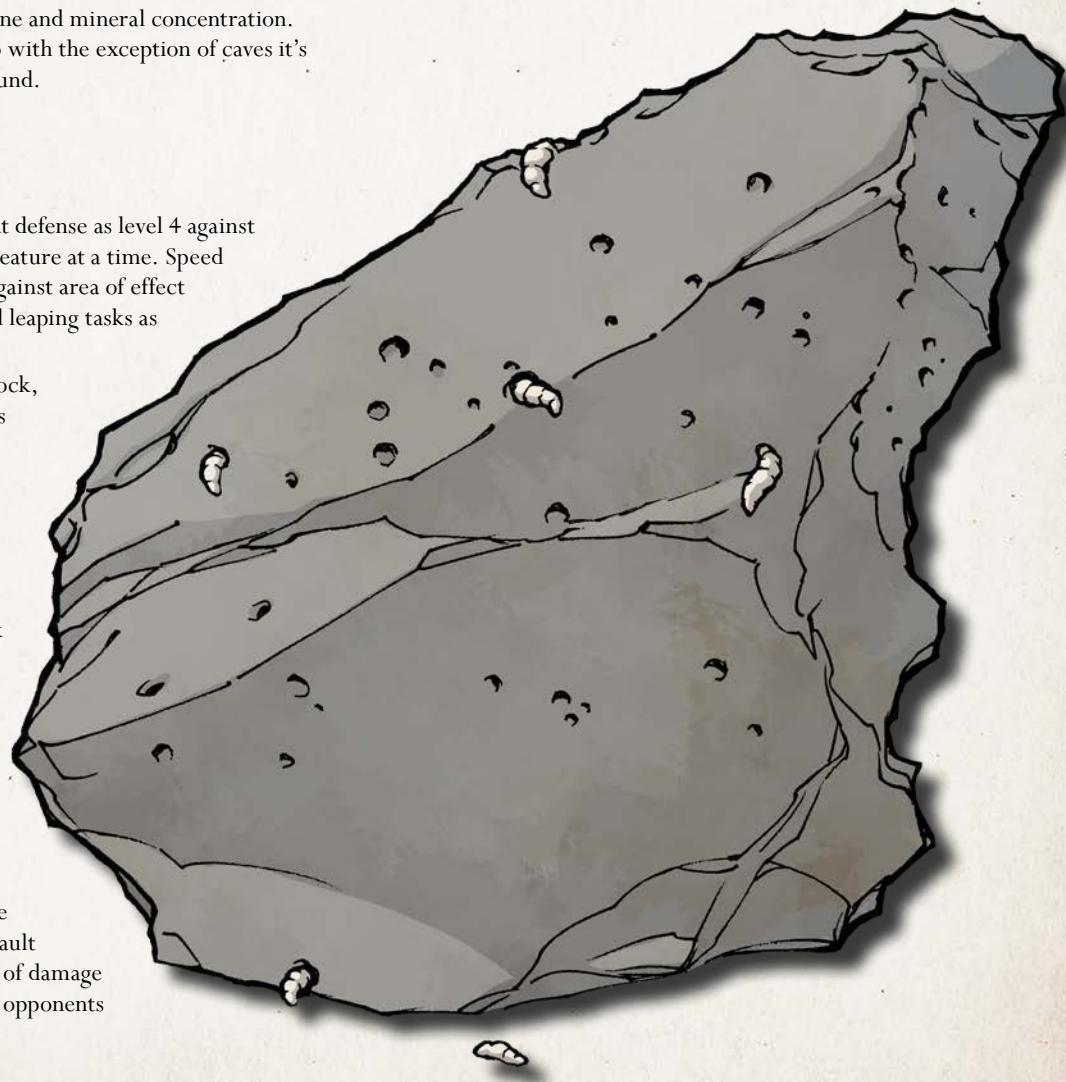
On unarmored opponents, the maggots begin their fleshy assault immediately, dealing 2 points of damage per round, assuming that said opponents fail their Might defense roll.

The best defense against rock maggots is fire. Their defenses against fire are lowered, and any fire damage counts for double against the maggots. Just keep in mind that these creatures typically travel in packs, and where there's one group of rock maggots there's often two or three more close behind.

INTERACTION: Rock maggots may travel in groups, but they're not psychic rat colonies. As mindless little creatures, they can be goaded around with the right chemicals and bait. They can even be captured, assuming that you have a container strong enough to hold them. They cannot communicate with people, though, so no roll is going to persuade these guys to stop nibbling on the Great Circle.

USE: One of the city's most prominent magineers hires the characters to clear out a small infestation of rock maggots from her floating tower in Wizards Way. When they dig into the task, the characters find that the infestation is much larger than it appears on the surface. If it isn't taken care of in the next few hours, the tower—and all the research contained within—is going to fall right out of the sky and onto some unsuspecting folk in Gnometown.

GM INTRUSION: A few stray maggots find their way into a character's backpack. No damage is done to the character, but one or two random metal items in the character's inventory are destroyed.





SHADOW ~ 6 [18]

An adventurer out in the field gets hit—seemingly out of nowhere—with a strong enough dose of dark energy to knock them flat. They get back up and finish the fight, never noticing the thing that has latched onto them.

Shadows are beings of pure dark energy. Any character can catch a shadow under the right circumstances. They come to people at the worst times in their lives, when they can live off their darkest feelings. They prey on grief and regret, two emotions which abound in Dragon City. Every bar in the Village has an old adventurer who's stopped trying to fight their shadow.

MOTIVE: Sap away the souls of their victims by preying on their fears.

ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere. They attach themselves to any humanoid with the misery to feed them.

HEALTH: 18

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 4 points.

MOVEMENT: None. Immediate when cast out.

MODIFICATIONS: Disguise, deception, and persuasion as level 7. Intellect defense as level 7. Immune to physical attacks.

COMBAT: Shadows don't speak, move, or attack directly. They are mental parasites that replace the physical shadow a character should cast. No two victims have precisely the same symptoms. One character stricken with a shadow may see auditory-visual hallucinations of people they have failed. Another may hear voices telling them how their efforts in life are futile and worthless. Yet another victim may feel the constant sensation of



spiders crawling across their skin. Potentially, someone could feel all three.

The shadow attacks by showing your character whatever would be the worst thing for them to witness at any given moment. This is a psychic attack which happens once per day and deals 4 points of damage, with no chance for the character to defend. While under the influence of a shadow, a character can't restore their stat pools by resting and instead must use special items or spells to keep from dying.

Once every 48 hours, a character stricken with a shadow can attempt a difficulty 7 Intellect task to cast the shadow out. This is a risky thing to do. On a failure, the shadow gets a free attack on its host. The task can't be reattempted until the host has had at least 48 to rest and muster their strength. Several things should be able to provide assets to this roll, including the identification of the shadow and what specific fears it is preying upon. A monster isn't as scary once you know what it is.

Cast-out shadows can be just as dangerous as their attached counterparts. As immaterial beings, they can only be damaged by magical weapons and spells. A cast-out shadow is determined, above all things, to reattach itself to its original host. Unattached to a host, a shadow takes the shape of a three-dimensional black orb approximately sixteen inches in diameter. Shadows cannot traditionally attack while detached from their host bodies. In orb form, a shadow's main goal is to reconnect with its host. For whatever reason, it refuses to do this while in the presence of observers other than the host, so its primary course of action is to launch a psychological fear campaign against everyone else in the room.

On its turn, the orb form of a shadow can attempt to instill fear against all opponents within a short distance. Any opponents who fail an Intellect defense roll against this attack must run screaming from the shadow for 2d6 rounds.

Once the shadow is alone with its host, it can attempt to reattach itself with a similar Intellect-based attack. If the host fails to defend, the shadow harmlessly reconnects to its host, recovering any hit points it lost while detached.

Shadows never try to flee or attach themselves to a new host. They are born to destroy one being, and they won't quit that mission until either they or their victim has been annihilated.

INTERACTION: As smart as they are malicious, shadows attempt to conceal themselves for as long as possible, to the point where it will create hallucinations specifically designed to lead characters away from properly diagnosing the problem. Victims who discover the shadow's influence and confront it head on can get the being to reveal itself—even converse with it—but the torment will not cease.

USE: Shadows are adept at getting characters to confront their inner turmoil. These monsters breathe such conflict, and sending one after a character who needs to deal with trauma lurking in their past can have spectacularly dramatic results.

LOOT: No direct loot—a dead shadow leaves nothing behind—but defeating one requires a lot of character growth and can involve countless screw-ups. Don't be stingy with the XP.

GM INTRUSION: The shadow shows its victim a vision so terrible that the character becomes momentarily frozen with terror. For the next minute, they are completely immobile.



STALKER ~ 3 [9]

There's a race of intelligent nomads roaming the wastes outside Dragon City who don't get brought up a lot at dinner time conversations. The Academy has done only the most basic research on them. The Imperial Guard makes only the most minimal contact with them. Adventurers are the only ones who dare to be seen around them.

It's not that they're dangerous or unsociable. On the whole, they're as friendly a folk as you'll ever come across in the wilds. The trouble is that they're flat-out ugly. No one can pin down precisely what species the slimy creatures might be related to. A stalker's head most resembles that of a praying mantis—oblong and green with blood red eyes. Its arms would resemble those of a praying mantis were it not for all their fur and fingers. They stand an unnerving seven feet tall, and have zebra-like stripes all around their torso. Couple that with the fact that they walk around on three spindly, fly-like legs, and you begin to understand why many people assume that the stalkers are dangerous monsters.

Stalkers existed long before the rise of the Ruler of the Dead. Even back then they were a nomadic folk, largely keeping to themselves. If anything, the rise of the Ruler of the Dead strengthened them as a people. Stalkers move fast, so the dead have never posed as much of a threat to their hunting grounds as the living have.

In the days before the Ruler's rise, there was no collective name for their species, but in the modern era they are referred to as stalkers for the way they stalk the wastes at night, effortlessly slipping past the undead. On a clear night, the highly perceptive can see them from the Great Circle as shadows in the distance, moving from ruin to ruin, trying to make their way in the world.

MOTIVE: Survive.

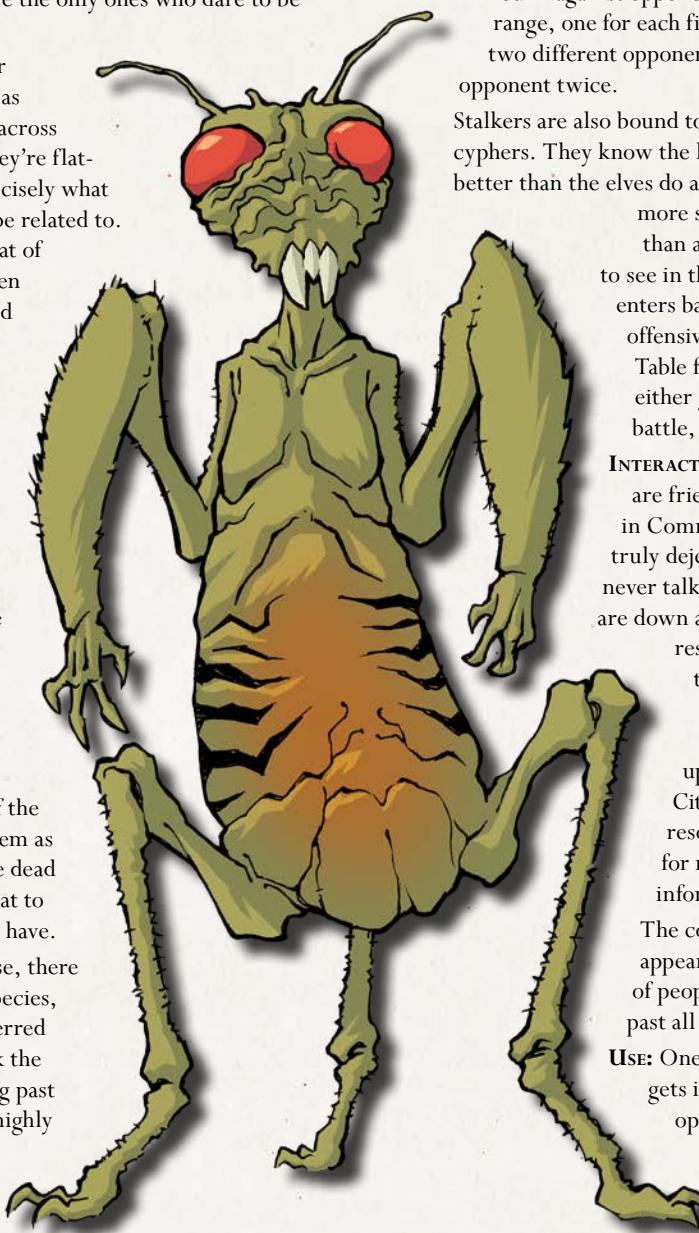
ENVIRONMENT: Outside the Great Circle, mostly in wooded areas. The existence of stalkers is not actively concealed, but it isn't taught in any schools either. If a guard saw one inside the walls, they'd probably try to kill it.

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 3 points.

MOVEMENT: Long.

MODIFICATIONS: Running, hunting, climbing, and scavenging tasks as level 5. Persuasion as level 2.



COMBAT: When possible, stalkers avoid conflict. Walking the wastes becomes easier the fewer enemies you have. Still, back one into a corner, and it won't hesitate to fight. A stalker's arms strike so rapidly you'd be forgiven for thinking they were spring loaded. The fists on the business ends of those arms only sweeten the deal. Stalkers can make two melee attacks per

round against opponents within their immediate range, one for each fist. This could mean punching two different opponents once, or punching the same opponent twice.

Stalkers are also bound to have a couple combat-ready cyphers. They know the lands outside the Great Circle better than the elves do at this point. A stalker gets

more scavenging done in a month than any normal character is likely to see in their lifetime. Before a stalker enters battle, select two random offensive cyphers from the Cypher Table for the stalker to wield. If either goes unused in the course of battle, the heroes may recover them.

INTERACTION: Around 95% of stalkers are friendly and at least crudely fluent in Common. Only the young and the truly dejected keep to themselves and never talk to city folk. Most adventurers are down and dirty enough to appreciate resources wherever they can get them and, well, it's not like the stalkers have good use for every single cypher they dig up. The adventurers of Dragon City frequently trade food and resources to stalkers in exchange for magical items and geographical information.

The conversational skills and appearances of most stalkers put a lot of people off, but characters who see past all that have an ally in these folk.

USE: One of the characters' old contacts gets in touch about a business opportunity. A big one. There's a stalker roaming near the Great Circle who says she's found an entrance to the fabled Town Hall of Watersmeet.

She's been telling this to anybody who'll listen. Trick is she says she'll only disclose the location for a 50% share of the gold that lies in the old Town Hall's vault, and she'll only accept such an offer from one person: the characters' party leader.

LOOT: 1 to 2 cyphers (assuming they're not used in combat) as well as some number of coins, usually about half a dozen silver.

GM INTRUSION: The stalker's jabs seem to flow together as they pick up their fighting pace. For the next three rounds, the stalker can make three attacks against opponents in immediate range. The first round this effect applies, all three attacks should focus on the same foe.

SWAMMBIE ~ 3 (9)

Not everyone who dies outside the Great Circle does so on dry land. The Ruler of the Dead's final siege on Watersmeet ended with a complete evacuation of the city. Some fled to sea. Many thousands more risked trekking across the nearby swamplands to the mountain where Dragon City stands today. Those who died in the crossing were eventually resurrected by the Ruler, but they didn't come back like her other creatures.

As beings of flame and gas, swambies are rare but volatile. The magic sustaining them does not itself arrest their decay, but something about the swamplands has preserved their corpses unusually long. Swambies appear to stay dripping and bloated with gas decades after their creation, though some have had enough flesh fall off that you can get glimpses of flaming bones beneath the surface. An unfortunate few rose alongside their pets, but that's another story (see "Hell Hounds").

MOTIVE: Burn and consume all living flesh.



ENVIRONMENT: As glowing beacons, swambies can be seen heading bands of the undead at night. They form small groups, as their volatile nature makes large hordes difficult. Of the few times Dragon City scouts have spotted larger gatherings of swambies, there are even fewer times those scouts lived to report it.

HEALTH: 16

DAMAGE INFlicted: 3–5 points.

MOVEMENT: Short during the day. Long at night.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 2. Might defense against fire attacks as level 5.

COMBAT: Swambies attack with bursts of gas that jet out of their limbs and ignite, striking any single opponent of their choosing within short range. For every successful attack the swambie gets on an opponent that they've already hit, the swambie does an extra point of damage. This represents the swambie wearing down their opponent with continuous burning pain.

- **0 Successful Attacks:** Deals 3 points of damage; attacks as level 3.
- **1 Successful Attack:** Deals 4 points of damage; attacks as level 4.
- **2 Successful Attacks:** Deals 5 points of damage; attacks as level 5.

This counter resets if the swambie or its prey is hit with enough water to put out a small fire, or if a minute passes without the swambie making a successful attack. Also, for characters immune to fire or elemental damage, the effect is negated. Then the swambie attacks as a normal zombie would—a level 2 creature that deals 2 points of damage per hit.

INTERACTION: Upon spotting living flesh, swambies typically let out a fiery roar, alerting any other undead within long range to the presence of a potential meal. They then rush directly at their prey. Some have hypothesized that they must be smarter than the average zombie, otherwise they wouldn't be able to effectively use these advanced tactics. Still, every attempt to communicate with a swambie has proven a lethal failure.

Like normal zombies, swambies endlessly pursue and consume whatever piece of living flesh they perceive to be closest.

USE: An old elven refugee from Watersmeet has contracted you to retrieve a precious family heirloom she believes vanished in the swamplands—along with many of her ancestors.

LOOT: The swamplands preserved the wallets of the dead as well as it preserved their bodies. A few coins are bound to be found in the pockets of most individual swambies—and, among larger groups, a couple cyphers or artifacts from Watersmeet.

GM INTRUSION: A PC hit by the swambie while fighting in swampland is knocked backward and begins to sink into the swamp. Until the PC succeeds on a Might-based task to pull themselves free, they are constricted and unable to take any actions. While in this constricted state, the difficulty of all defense rolls increases by one step.

TECHNOLOGICAL MARVEL OF THE FUTURE! NO. 1 ~ 4 [12]

Long after the construction of the Great Circle was finished and all the glowglobes were put up along the streets, the gnomish engineers tasked with creating Dragon City's infrastructure allowed themselves to be drawn into some more high-concept projects. Automation was among the first ideas to be tackled. After all, tinkering requires a lot of work.

Figurines and dolls capable of performing simple actions like clapping and picking up specific objects, like tools, were the first to be designed. Basic quality of life implements like elevators and conveyor belts followed shortly after. The War Research branch of the Academy of Arcane Sciences eventually took this notion to its logical extreme: automated weapons.

The idea of humanoid-shaped automatas—sentient humanoid weapons—was tested but ultimately wound up being discarded as impractical. Eventually Academy's engineers settled on a device that they attempted to sell to the public as the “Technological Marvel of the Future! No. 1.”

In essence, it's a machine-gun designed to shoot anything that walks into its line of sight.

Planned to be the first in a long line of weapons for fighting the undead, a large number of the machines were, for a time, placed around the perimeter of the Great Circle. Unfortunately, the dead simply used their endless numbers to topple them with little effort. When it came to killing undead enemies, the mindless machines proved inefficient and ineffective. The Imperial Guard quickly ruled that the Technological Marvels weren't worth the risk that it took maintain them, so the rest of the line was scrapped.

MOTIVE: Fire on sight.

ENVIRONMENT: These days what remains of the original No. 1 units can be seen guarding the richer and more paranoid estates in Dragon City. Prominent wizards and elves often have a No. 1 somewhere on their property, as do many of the gnomish engineers old enough to have been involved in the project.

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 5 points.

MOVEMENT: Immobile.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 1 due to immobile nature. Perception tasks as level 6. Impossible to intimidate or persuade.

COMBAT: The inventors of these devices were no slouches. No. 1s are belt-fed, solid steel, and capable swiveling around 360 degrees in the blink of an eye. In a single turn, they can make two attacks on up to two targets within a short range. Each of its shots does 5 damage apiece.

It has two weaknesses: it cannot move, and it tends to jam. Anyone out of its sensor range or behind cover is completely safe from a No. 1's attacks. Furthermore, if a No. 1 rolls a 1 on any of its attacks, it jams instantly and is rendered inoperable until someone succeeds on a difficulty 3 Intellect-based task to fix it.

INTERACTION: The motion sensors on the No. 1s are entirely indiscriminate. Anything bigger than a dog that comes within their range will be shot. A few people have been killed while clumsily setting the machines up. The only way to properly manipulate the machines is through remote activation. Owners of No. 1s enter their homes and then activate the machines remotely, making sure to power them down again in the morning before they go out. If a character can find the remote for a given No. 1, they can power it on and off at will.

USE: The War Research branch of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship repurchased a couple of the old No. 1 units. In a collaboration with some gnomish engineers, they found a new use for the old guns: aerial defense.

The next airship going

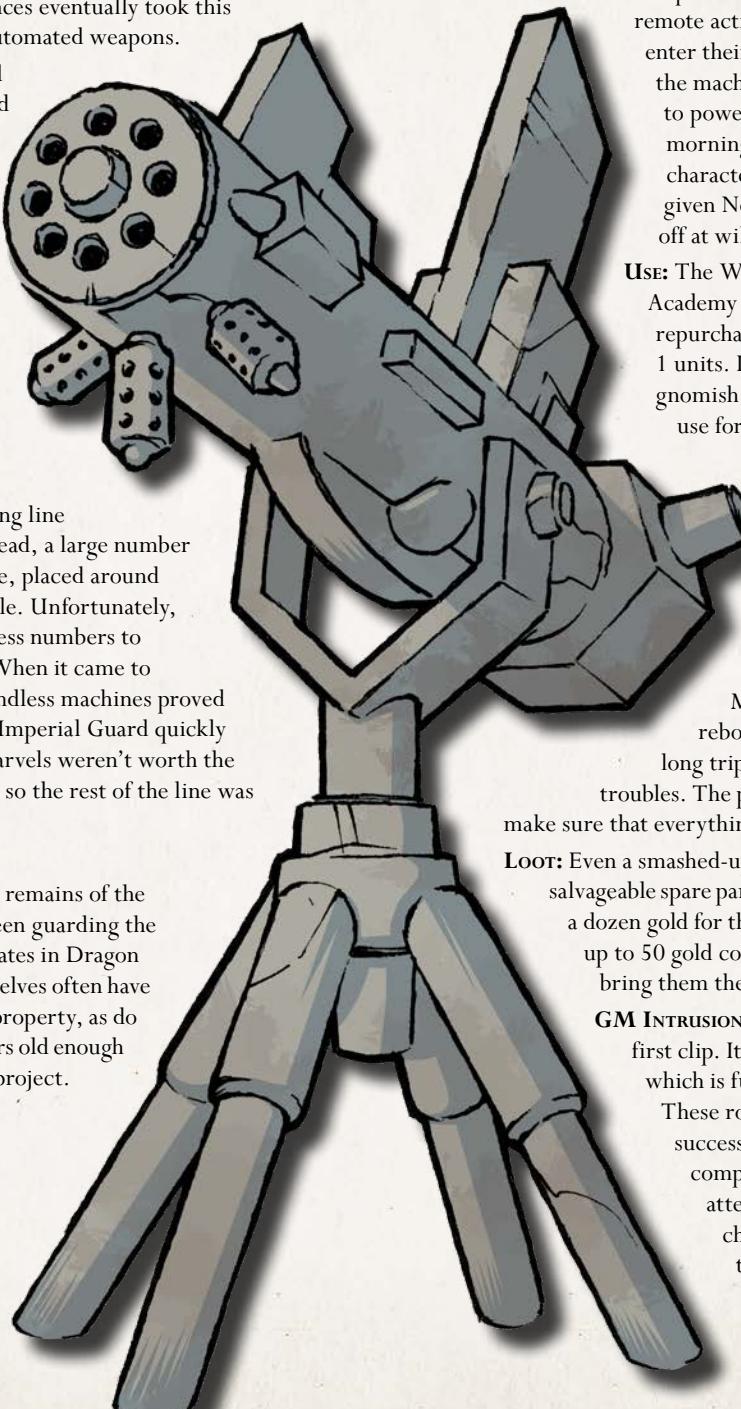
out on a diplomatic mission across the ocean will be equipped with two No. 1s for fending off wyverns and the like. If everything

goes well the “Technological Marvels” line might finally be

rebooted. The trick is, it's a week-long trip with a lot of potential for troubles. The project lead hires the heroes to make sure that everything goes smoothly.

LOOT: Even a smashed-up No. 1 has plenty of salvageable spare parts. The right engineer will pay a dozen gold for the assorted guts of a No. 1 and up to 50 gold coins if you somehow manage to bring them the whole thing.

GM INTRUSION: The No. 1 runs out of its first clip. It switches to its backup supply, which is full of armor-piercing rounds. These rounds deal 7 damage on a successful hit, and they ignore armor completely. The No. 1 immediately attempts to shoot the closest character in its line of sight with these new rounds.



TURTLER ~ 3 (9)

You could call turtlers the black sheep of the beastman family, though the actual black sheep beastmen wouldn't deign to snort in their general direction. Most beastmen are nomads, but the turtlers like to settle down in one place for long periods. Even before the dead came, they were despised for being the slowest and least effective members of any cross-beastman raiding team. Not that this was true, but even beastman society has its scapegoats. Ironically, the outcast position turtlers hold makes them the easiest beastmen for adventurers to form long-term relationships with.

MOTIVE: Survive.

ENVIRONMENT: These days turtlers are shunned from wider beastman society. Unlike their cousins, turtlers don't need to travel from ruin to ruin in search of food and protection. Their spiked shells provide all the protection they need. Most have settled in small villages of hunter-scavengers within the wooded regions surrounding the Crystal River, where there's plenty of food and easy means of locomotion.

HEALTH: 9

DAMAGE INFlicted:
2 points.

MOVEMENT:
Immediate on land. Long in water.

MODIFICATIONS:
Hunting and scavenging as level 5.
Stealth and running as level 2.

COMBAT: A turtler's only natural weapon is their teeth, which they can use to chomp down on an enemy in immediate range to deal 2 points of damage.

To counteract their individual weakness, turtlers like to hunt in groups. Sometimes half a dozen turtlers can be seen coming over the same patch of land.

If a character catches one alone, the turtler's first action upon being attacked is letting out a warning cry before retreating into its shell.

It takes a round for a turtler to retract into a shell, and while hunkering down they are immobilized. The shell provides the natural equivalent of 4 Armor, and the defensive spikes on its

outside ensure that any character trying to make a melee attack against the shell will automatically take 1 point of damage, ignoring their own armor.

In the event of a large-scale attack on one of their villages, turtlers have been known to take up proper arms—swords, spears, even guns that they've obtained through trade—but for the most part they are content to rely on their natural capabilities.

INTERACTION: Like most beastmen, turtlers are suspicious and fearful of Dragon City, a place they know poses just as much of a genocidal danger to them as the undead do. That said, they are not particularly hostile toward individual people from the city, and they've been known to engage in frequent trade with adventurers. Turtlers dig up a surprising number of valuable trinkets and cyphers just wandering around the river.

One out of every three turtlers is at least crudely fluent in Common. Generally, settlement leaders and merchants can speak the tongue, while a village's hunters and scavengers tend to communicate solely in the turtler language of quiet calls and yaps.

USE: Halfling barkeep Nit Erdini puts out the call. In a stunning case of bad luck—or theft—one of his below-the-board shipments of dragonfire was redirected outside the Great Circle to a turtler settlement. Nit certainly can't complain to the Imperial Dragon's Guard about the loss of his illegal goods, so he needs someone to do some retrieval work for him.

He hires the PCs to go to the turtler settlement and see if there's some way to negotiate getting the shipment back. It's worth a lot more to him than it is to them—he hopes.

LOOT: Prominent villager turtlers like to carry a couple of cyphers on their person. Turtlers lower in the power structure at least have some berries and herbs on them, apothecary items which are worth a few silver or 1d6 hit points when ingested.

GM INTRUSION: The turtler lets out an unusually high-pitched yawp, and 1–3 more turtlers come racing out from the trees.

UNDER CHIMERA ~ 6 (18)



The Ruler of the Dead has tried numerous times to bring animals into her undead fold. Usually these attempts have failed pathetically. A decayed animal's corpse is rarely as strong as a humanoid's. Many of her experiments with flying creatures never even got off the ground.

Then there was the time, about three hundred years ago, when she got the idea to try frankensteining several undead creatures together. Creatures where one vital piece was destroyed could be combined with other creatures to make up the difference.

The result was her chimera. The body of a lion with the head of a goat and an entire snake where the tail should be.

A single chimera takes days for even the Ruler to sew together and animate, so you're never going to see large hordes of these creatures. The few she has made still stalk the wastes, serving as a leading cause of death for novice adventurers. Some fear that the Ruler's relative silence for the last several decades might be explained by her finally deciding to build large numbers of chimeras, or develop even nastier undead monstrosities—or both.

MOTIVE: Feed on living flesh.

ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere outside Dragon City. They like to roam the deep and dark places of the wastes: caves, forests, high mountaintops.

HEALTH: 25

DAMAGE INFlicted: 6 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Running, jumping, and climbing tasks as level 7.

COMBAT: The chimera attack strategy is as three-fold as the chimera's body. Upon spotting potential prey, the chimera charges, attempting to leap upon its victim and maul them with its lion claws. The claws do 6 points of damage to a single opponent in immediate range, and on a successful hit the target must make a Speed defense roll to avoid becoming pinned beneath the chimera.

On a failure, the target is rendered immobile, and the next phase begins. A pinned target or—in rare cases—a target standing directly behind the chimera can be bitten by the undead serpent that makes up the chimera's tail. The serpent's venom is infused with necromantic magic. Any character injected with it must succeed on a Might defense roll or instantly drop one step down on the damage track and become paralyzed.

Of course, the worst part comes in the third and final phase of a chimera's attack. Any paralyzed targets within immediate range of the chimera are at risk of being eaten alive by the chimera's goat head. The lion and serpent parts of a chimera can continue to attack targets within immediate range even while the goat part is feeding, but unless circumstances force it to move, the chimera prefers to stand still while eating. The goat head can unlock its jaw and

can effectively devour any humanoid in three rounds. While being eaten, the character can attempt a difficulty 6 Intellect-based task to break free of the paralysis and slip away from the chimera's jaws. Additionally, any of that character's allies can perform a difficulty 4 Might-based task to pull said character from the chimera's jaws, with the added caveat that they must come within immediate range of the chimera to do so. If the character fails to escape or otherwise be rescued from the goat's jaws within three rounds, they are devoured whole and killed instantly.

In cases where this would be an unfair or anticlimactic death for a major PC or NPC, exceptions should be made. Perhaps the devoured character is just knocked down to the second-to-last step on their damage track and can still be saved by cutting the chimera open.

INTERACTION: There's no hope of interacting with a chimera any more than there is with a zombie. In fact, there's quite a lot less. Chimeras are far more vicious. A slow zombie might let you get a few words in before it starts tearing out your entrails.

USE: A couple of the Sustenance Society leaders are worried.

Recently certain livestock have been going missing from the mountain farms on a regular basis. Goats specifically have been disappearing like sheep in a wolf's den, and the rest of the animals aren't acting like their usual selves. Even the garden snakes have stopped slithering about.

The characters are hired on for a simple job: watch the pens and make sure nothing gets out. Or in.

LOOT: The poison in a chimera's tail is potent stuff. Extract a vial, and somebody in the black market will definitely be willing to take it off your hands for a couple dozen gold. Alternatively, you could use it yourself.

GM INTRUSION: The slit yellow eyes of the goat animate as it unhinges its jaw and tears off a huge chunk of a character's flesh with its teeth. The character takes 9 points of damage and is instantly paralyzed from the shock. If they want to keep from being eaten, someone is going to have to give them a hand.



WARHORSE ~ 4 [12]

As smaller humanoids, often pigeonholed into nonathletic tinkering jobs, gnomish adventurers are at a serious risk of having the undead hordes outpace them. Typically they rely on the assistance of others or on cyphers to give them an extra boost, but for the tinkerer with a little more money, there's a flashier solution.

Developed by the Transport Society for rapid intracity travel, warhorses were discarded in the testing stage for being too expensive. Creating a warhorse requires taming a wild horse, raising it, and then custom fitting the creature with specialized armor and bionics. After the society made their schematics public, private stables grabbed upon the idea as a way to squeeze money out of the adventuring market.

They're premium commodities. A proper warhorse costs upward of 200 gold. Still, buying a warhorse is a lot easier and cheaper than trying to bootleg a griffin.

And the results speak for themselves. Gnomish adventurers use warhorses habitually. Dwarves grab one up occasionally, if they can swallow their pride enough to buy such an expensive gnomish product.

Humans and orcs buy up the mounts for the prestige factor, despite the fact that they tend to be terrible jockeys. Elves are the only holdouts. What few elven adventurers exist wouldn't be caught dead riding such a beast.

MOTIVE: Survive and serve their rider, in that order.



ENVIRONMENT: Warhorses are found in a few private stables in Gnometown. Wild horses still exist in the wilderness in small numbers. If a character can tame one and get it back to the city, a wild horse can be converted into a warhorse for a fee.

HEALTH: 12

DAMAGE INFlicted: 4 points.

MOVEMENT: Short. Long when ridden by a small jockey.

MODIFICATIONS: Athleticism tasks as level 5. Speed defense as level 6.

COMBAT: Warhorses take 1 round to mount or dismount. While a character is on a horse, they attack normally but gain the advantages of the horse's attacks as well. The mount can attempt to attack a single opponent within immediate range with their hooves, for 4 points of damage, once per round. Warhorses ridden by small characters gain an extra advantage. Their jockey's small size gives the horse the extra speed it needs to go a long distance with its movement.

A character trying to mount a warhorse that belongs to, or is ridden by, an enemy must succeed in a difficulty 5 Might-based task. Mounting and dismounting a loyal warhorse is a free action, but dismounting can occur automatically if the rider is knocked prone or the warhorse experiences any kind of psychological fear effect, causing it to buck.

Mounted warhorses go and attack where their riders direct, but a warhorse with no rider acts according to its own motives. Even when riderless, warhorses charge at and attack any creature that seems to mean its rider harm. These steeds are loyal to a fault and only flee when absolutely backed into a corner.

INTERACTION: The relationship between a warhorse and its rider is closer than that between parent and child. There were some training slip-ups in the early days, but in the last decade not one warhorse has been returned to its original stable master for bad behavior in the field. That doesn't mean a difficult warhorse can't happen, just that it would be a scandal on the level of vampires living in the Elven Reaches.

USE: Stables are just about the only places in Gnometown that hire guards. While other gnomish vendors forget to lock the doors of their shops at night, stable masters assign mercenaries to cover separate tactical points around the perimeter of their feeding pens. In Gnometown, warhorses are as premium as premium commodities come.

Last night the owner of the Sublime Equine Ranch opened her shop to find all her warhorses missing. There were no knocks in the night, and not one of her mercenaries reported seeing anyone or anything get into the stables or out. Most folks foolhardy enough to attempt a warhorse theft try and fail to break in and ride out on one, but this? This is something huge. If the city at large gets wind of this, it would mean the end of her ranch, and possibly a lot worse. Your band of adventurers is called in to find out where in the city these warhorses are being kept. Her mercenaries can do the rest. There's a free steed in it for you if you succeed.

LOOT: A warhorse's fitted armor can sell for upward of a dozen gold on the black market.

GM INTRUSION: The warhorse slips on difficult terrain and bucks its rider hard. The rider takes 6 damage, gets covered in muck, and is separated from the warhorse by a short distance.

WATER BEARS ~ 6 [18]

Forty years ago, the water bears just started crawling out of the Crystal River. If you were alive at the time, you could see the first ones as they appeared, just a few thousand feet out from the Great Circle. The gate guards who saw them emerge started shooting immediately, but their shots bounced off the animals' hides. The beasts weren't even provoked. The strongest hand cannons in the city barely seemed to dent the creatures. Even the dead seemed to have no idea what to do with them. Eventually the artillery was called in.

And still they stood.

While colloquially called "water bears," these creatures more closely resemble safes on six legs than any forest animal. Their hides are purple-gray, semi-translucent, free of fur, and nearly impenetrable. As far as the Academy knows, dragon scales are the only tougher substance on the planet. The "bears" have no eyes, no obvious reproductive organs, and—in place of a mouth—one circular hole filled with row after row of razor sharp teeth.

MOTIVE: Despite appearances, all water bears really want to do is graze on grass and local wildlife. They're slow, they're pastoral, and when left alone they're perfectly peaceful.

ENVIRONMENT: Water bears like to hang around the grasslands between the Great Circle and the western mountains, where there's plenty of grass to graze on, and they're never too far from the Crystal River where they were born.

HEALTH: 15

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 6 points.

MOVEMENT: Immediate.

MODIFICATIONS: Immune to physical attack. Takes half damage from magical attacks and full damage only from magical fire attacks.

COMBAT: Water bears move and attack slowly. A water bear bite can do 6 points of damage to an opponent in immediate range,

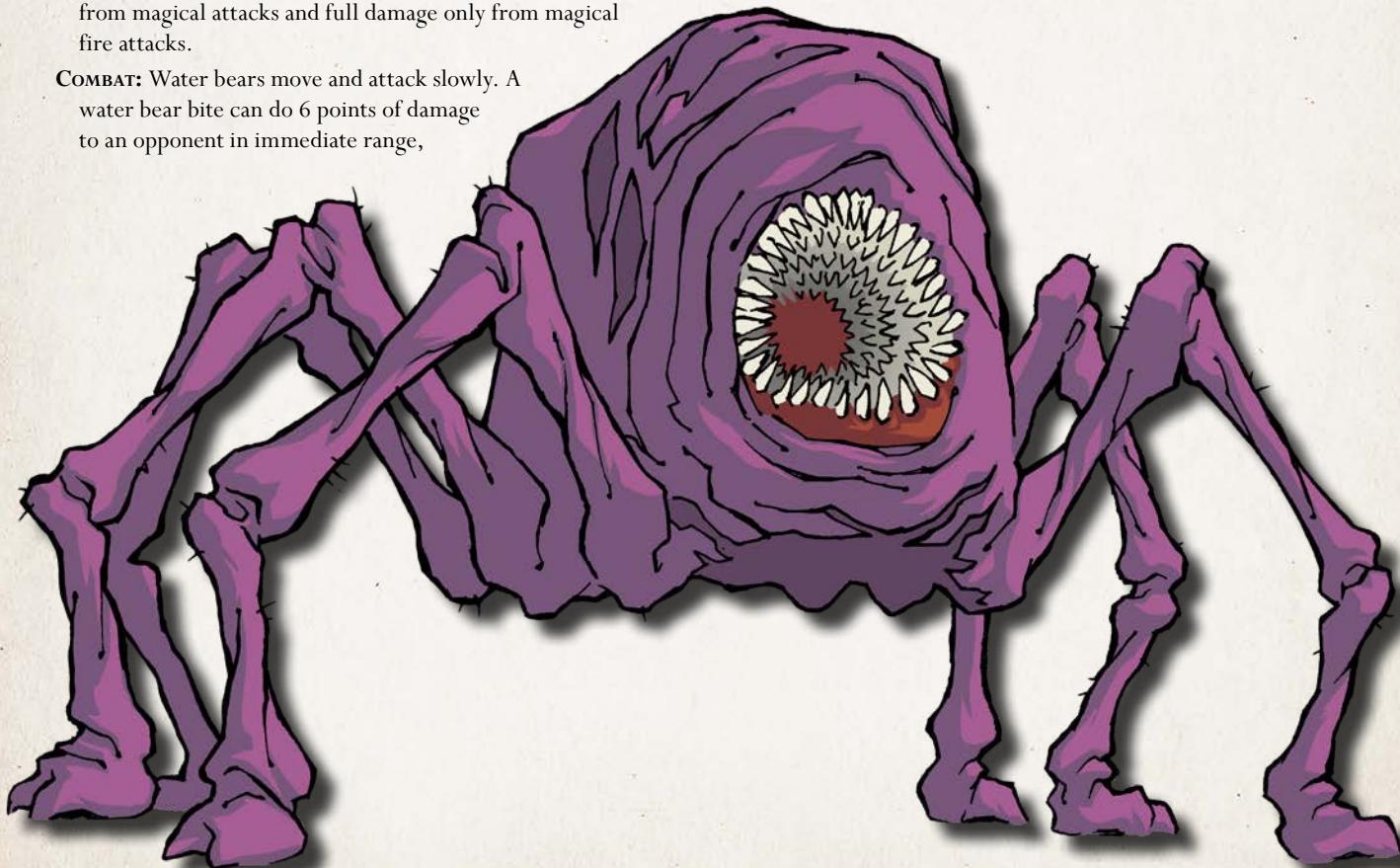
but the bears hardly ever attack. They only fight when provoked, and if their opponents flee, they don't pursue. If attacked from a distance with magic, a water bear will run at top speed for cover, usually in the direction of the river.

INTERACTION: Never cross a water bear, and a water bear will never cross you. That said, they aren't great conversationalists. From what little the Academy has been able to piece together, it's thought that the water bears are some sort of gigantic mutated version of a microscopic organism. The water bear brain, much as you can call it one, is a very simple, overgrown neural network. Someone specialized in science or animal communication/handling might be able to manipulate a water bear into functioning as sort of a mount. Just don't expect to get anywhere quickly.

USE: A contract comes down from the Toysmiths Guild, of all places. Guildmaster Julianne Murphy is looking for a group of adventurers who can do some research on water bears. A large group of them was just birthed out of the river, not too far from the wall, and she sees this as the perfect opportunity to finally design water bear plushies. Go out, get some sketches, try not to provoke anything, and report back. Oh, and see if you can uncover any evidence of where the water bears come from while you're at it. Kids love a good origin story.

LOOT: For a blacksmith, getting a water bear hide is like having all your Winter Solstices at once. They pay top fees to buy them, and they never forget the person who gives them one as a gift.

GM INTRUSION: A character smacks the water bear in the mouth, sending it into a frenzy. The water bear now charges short range distances, ruthlessly pursuing its attacker.



WENDIGO ~ 6 [18]

The dead are not the only flesh eaters on the continent. To this day it's unknown if the spell that animates the dead is directly based off the magic that creates wendigos. If they aren't directly related, then they're suspiciously similar looking strangers.

Any humanoid can become a wendigo under the right circumstances. Extreme hunger and starvation coupled with a hunger for humanoid flesh creates a very specific kind of dark energy. It happens often to parties trapped outside the Great Circle.

The cannibal's skin shrinks and pulls itself tight, turning an ashen brown, tearing and reforming at the seams. Their fingernails and fingers extend into hard branch-like claws, while their old skeleton expands to press against and jut out of their skin. Standing 9 feet tall, they look simultaneously starved and massive, weak and powerful. A light layer of nearly translucent fur is common.

The creatures hunch and skitter in animalistic ways, to the point where some of the old legends speak of them as having antlers jutting out of their scalps. In fact, a few of the oldest specimens have grown such appendages. That, however, is not the most frightening part of their aspect. The twisted face of a wendigo is far too humanoid looking for comfort.

MOTIVE: Feed on humanoid flesh.

ENVIRONMENT: Anywhere. Most are created by the desperate cannibalism of some person stranded far outside the Great Circle, but there have been a number of horrifying cases in which someone living inside the city's walls spontaneously decided that dining on humanoid flesh sounded tasty too.

HEALTH: 18

DAMAGE INFlicted: 6 points.

MOVEMENT: Long.

MODIFICATIONS: Stealth as level 8. Speed defense rolls as level 7 due to nimble nature.

COMBAT: Rip and tear. The wendigo exists to kill and eat and kill and eat, a task it accomplishes with ferocious velocity. In a single round, it can charge at an opponent from long range and attack twice, dealing 6 points of damage with each swipe of its claws.

INTERACTION: Wendigos cannot be reasoned with, and no cure for the wendigo transformation has ever been found. However, it takes a couple weeks for a wendigo to complete its transformation from humanoid into unforgivable beast. If a wendigo is encountered before they have fully transformed, it is possible to arrest the condition by getting them well-fed—on

more standard food—and preventing them from feeding on any more humanoid flesh. A full wendigo can't be helped, only avoided.

If there is one thing that works against the wendigo, it is the creature's own hunger for humanoid flesh. With the right ingenuity and forethought, it's trivial to set a baited trap for a wendigo. No cage can hold these things for long, but even a temporary trap can offer a huge combat advantage. The trick is that the bait has to be humanoid flesh. For most monster hunters, that means either sneaking old flesh out of the city morgue, or—better yet—using themselves as bait.

USE: Grusha Alkaev is the leader of Gnometown's Sustenance Society, dedicated to providing food and water to all the people of Dragon City. Recently the society was thrown into crisis when an influx of monsters cut off contact with their oldest experimental farm. It had been assumed that the farm was safe, located high in the mountains with only one well-barricaded land route. Of course, all it took was for a large enough horde to come clamoring through for that well-protected land route to suddenly become an impassable land route. It became too dangerous to get to the farm a couple of weeks ago, right after harvest time. Trouble is, there were still a few Sustenance Society recruits standing guard up there, and not a lot of food. Rather than risk any more of her people, Grusha has recruited your team to break into the old farm and rescue any survivors.

She cautions your team to be careful, for who knows what her recruits might have resorted to by now?

LOOT: Bizarrely, the overinflated bones of a wendigo are considered lucky charms among most of the people of Dragon City. A few ribs taken from a wendigo corpse can command a fair amount of gold on the black market.

GM INTRUSION: The wendigo's claws strike just right and slice open a character's stomach with minimal damage to the surrounding tissue. Only the normal amount of damage is taken, but if the character doesn't receive serious, high-level medical treatment within the next few days, they bleed to death.





CHAPTER 3: CITIZENS

THE CIVILIANS OF DRAGON CITY

There are times in every adventure, regrettable as they are, during which your characters may come to blows with the civilians of Dragon City. The next section of this book outlines how the civilian races of Dragon City differ and how to handle conflicts and interactions with each.

A key thing to remember in any interaction with citizens of Dragon City is that they rarely stand alone. No one is without friends and allies. Everyone has some form of family, no matter how distant. After all, just about everyone in the city was born and raised there. The only rare exceptions among the locals are a diminishing number of elderly elves and the Dragon Emperor himself.

Visitors from out of town are rarer than diamonds and often stick out in the crowd by virtue of their clothing and hairstyles, which can vary widely. Most of them come from across the sea, hailing from lands far beyond the reach of the Ruler of the Dead. To arrive in Dragon City, though, requires a huge investment in time and money—or at least magic—and usually involves no small amount of danger. The people who arrive here from lands outside the continent are never simply tourists. They come with a purpose.

Dragon City is a diverse and vibrant place, so no encounter with anyone in the city should ever be as simple as “Elf #3.” Every person in Dragon City has their own name, resources, appearance, and entanglements, and often these things may not be what the players expect them to be. The templates provided in this section are just that—templates—based on archetypes based on some types of people common to Dragon City. Feel free to change up any of their stats and information when you use them for your own encounters.

The one thing most people of Dragon City have in common is a fear of the Ruler of the Dead and her monstrous army. It’s been many years since the undead have made a concerted effort to destroy the city, but that unspoken threat hangs over everything like storm clouds gathering on the horizon. It’s not a question of if another attack will come but when.

Because of this, the people of Dragon City have a fearful respect for and horror of the dying and the dead. The groans of the undead which come from outside the walls serve as a constant reminder of life’s precious and fleeting nature and how, at any time, the Ruler could march some horrible new army up to the Great Gate and end everything.

This doesn’t keep people from fighting over the things that matter to their day to day lives—nor should it—but it does lend a certain grim atmosphere to the general proceedings.

DWARF ~ 1 [3]

Most civilian dwarves are as good-hearted as they are generous. The Stronghold government may be corrupt and isolationist, but its people are kind and adventurous. Its drinking culture has no rival. Your average dwarf is honest, direct, and usually not too racist—although the rich dwarves who have dug out villas for themselves near the top of the Stronghold may be harboring some more controversial views about their gnomish cousins.

With dwarves being stout and covered in hair, beard culture is almost as important to the Stronghold as drink culture. Most male dwarves stand about 3 feet tall, but it's not uncommon to see them with beards a foot long or more. Braids are nearly universal, but the type of braid varies from dwarf to dwarf, and what kind of braids are in vogue at any given moment is a constantly changing question.

MOTIVE: Varies from person to person. Most are just trying to eke out a life for themselves while maintaining a place of honor and respect within their clan.

ENVIRONMENT:

Dragon City.
Most live in the Stronghold.

HEALTH: 3

DAMAGE

INFlicted: 1 point.

MOVEMENT:
Short.

MODIFICATIONS:
Low light vision. Digging and climbing tasks as level 3. Intimidation and charisma tasks as level 2.

COMBAT: The Stronghold can be a hard place to grow up, and dwarves are no strangers to improvisation. They'll fight with whatever they can fashion into a weapon. At home, few dwarves are ever too far from a pickax to swing or a bottle to chuck. However, civilian dwarves

are not trained in combat, and unless they pick up something particularly powerful, their attacks do only 1 point of damage to a single opponent—within immediate or short range as context dictates.

Their knowledge of their own home turf is the only thing that gives the average dwarf a combat advantage. On their



turn, a civilian dwarf in the Stronghold can choose to grab a weapon and retreat to a hidey-hole instead of attack. Bunker building sprang up as an outcropping of the Stronghold's larger mining economy, and the people of the Stronghold have built personalized panic rooms and defensive alcoves all over the place, just in case of emergency. While in the hidey-hole, the dwarf's attack rolls become one step more difficult, but they also have the natural equivalent of 2 Armor.

INTERACTION: Left to themselves, dwarves are peaceful miners and barkeeps—but antagonize one, and they'll find a reason to fight. The culture of the Stronghold valorizes direct conflict. Whether it's an innkeeper a character shorted a little coin or a dwarven blacksmith who never got their rental sword back, it's not hard to draw these folk into conflict. It is significantly harder to draw them back out. As fair folk they're open to ceasing their grudge once any grievances they have are put to bed—especially if you offer to have an ale with them to smooth the whole thing over.

Use: Dwarves dig into strange things all the time. Half the population of the Stronghold has been involved in the mining industry at some point in their lives. It's not unusual for a dwarf to drill their way into a new cavern system or discover a new subterranean creature. Typically it just means a party and some respect within the clan for the lucky discoverer.

A couple weeks ago, a dwarf dug into a vein of ore of a kind she'd never seen before. She practically ran to tell her clan about these glowing orange rocks. The usual ceremonies proceeded. But since then, strange things have been happening. With the exception of the discoverer, everyone who's come in direct contact with the rocks has become deathly ill. She's offering up 100 gold to anyone who can discover the cause of all this.

Loot: One dwarf in four has a bit of ore left over in their pockets, worth roughly a dozen gold pieces.

GM INTRUSION: A thrown dwarven pick lands a little too well and catches a character right in the eye. They take 4 points of damage, and for the next week all perception-based tasks are two steps more difficult.

ELF ~ 1 [3]

Tall, lanky, eternal, and pompous beyond belief. That's elves.

Civilian elves live in large estates up in the Elven Reaches. Their community is insular, heavily guarded, and obsessed with spotless reputations. They spend their time trying to politely but ruthlessly impress and outdo one another. In the rare occasion that an elf does leave their estate, it will usually be to visit the neighboring estates so they can brag about their own estate's upcoming renovations.

Ironically similar to the gangs in Goblintown, they abide by a strict code of manners, where so much as being seen in the wrong place at the wrong time can be considered a violation comparable to murder. The only difference is the penalty. Violating an elven code means embarrassment and disgrace. Violating a Goblintown code means a quick, tragic death.

MOTIVE: Varies from person to person, though most have a stake in preserving a spotless reputation amongst their fellow elves.

ENVIRONMENT: Dragon City, though seeing them any lower on the mountain than the Stronghold Gate is rare.

HEALTH: 4

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 1 point.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense rolls as level 2 due to nimble nature. Intimidation and persuasion as level 3 due to arrogant and self-satisfied lifestyle.

COMBAT: The elven families form the strongest group in Dragon City. They've been around the longest. Politically they control the most resources per capita of any race in the city. The only thing dragging them down is that they are incredibly lazy. Civilian elves rarely do anything but lay about in their gated communities. The eldest elves are thousands of years old and have let their bodies fall into complete disarray. To an extent, this is understandable. After all, why learn self-defense when your heavily secured estate is self-sustaining? Why even venture out?

With the exception of a few progressive rebels like Bellezza Sanguigno, elves are the worst fighters in Dragon City. They attack clumsily with whatever is on hand, usually a cane or staff, for a whopping 1 point of damage on a single opponent in melee. Most elves are so unfamiliar with fighting that they tend to trip and fall in combat. Every time a civilian elf fails a combat roll, roll a d20. On a 5 or less, the elf loses their balance and falls prone.

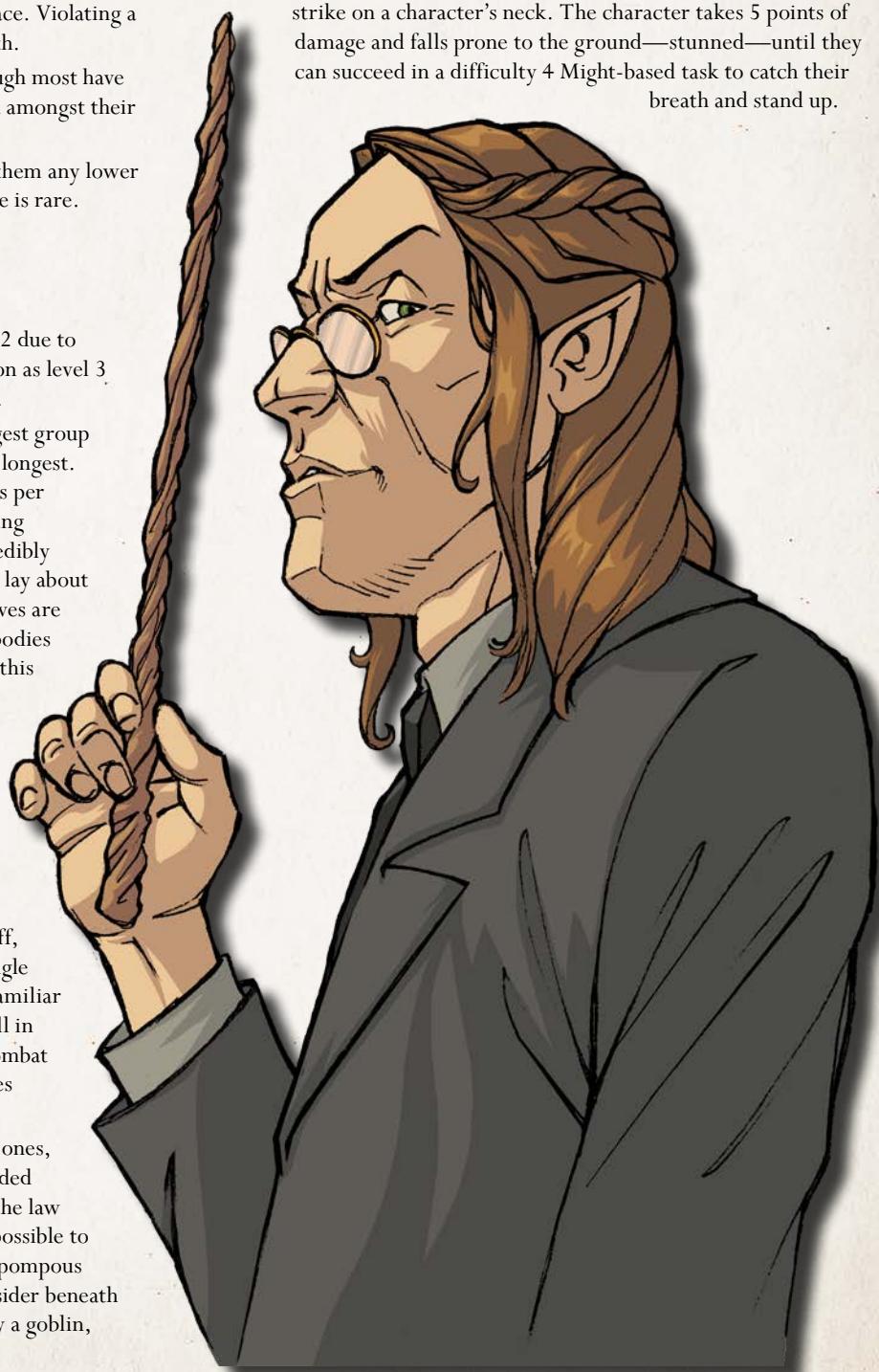
INTERACTION: Most elves, particularly older ones, are set in their ways and not easily persuaded to do... anything. They cooperate when the law is involved, but they also find every way possible to be fussy and difficult. The truly rich and pompous often refuse to speak with races they consider beneath themselves. Any persuasion tasks made by a goblin,

orc, or even human character against a civilian elf should be increased in difficulty by a step or two.

USE: An elf has heard through the grapevine about the characters' success in the lower reaches and decides to hire them as heads of security for their upcoming gala. This is a high-profile event in the elf community. If this thing goes sideways, the elf will never be able to live it down. Guard the estate, get rid of any suspicious characters, and make sure nothing goes wrong. The elf has more than enough coin to make it worth the characters' while.

LOOT: Elves rarely carry their own funds—especially when going out. That said, one in three will have 20 to 30 gold coins worth of pocket change.

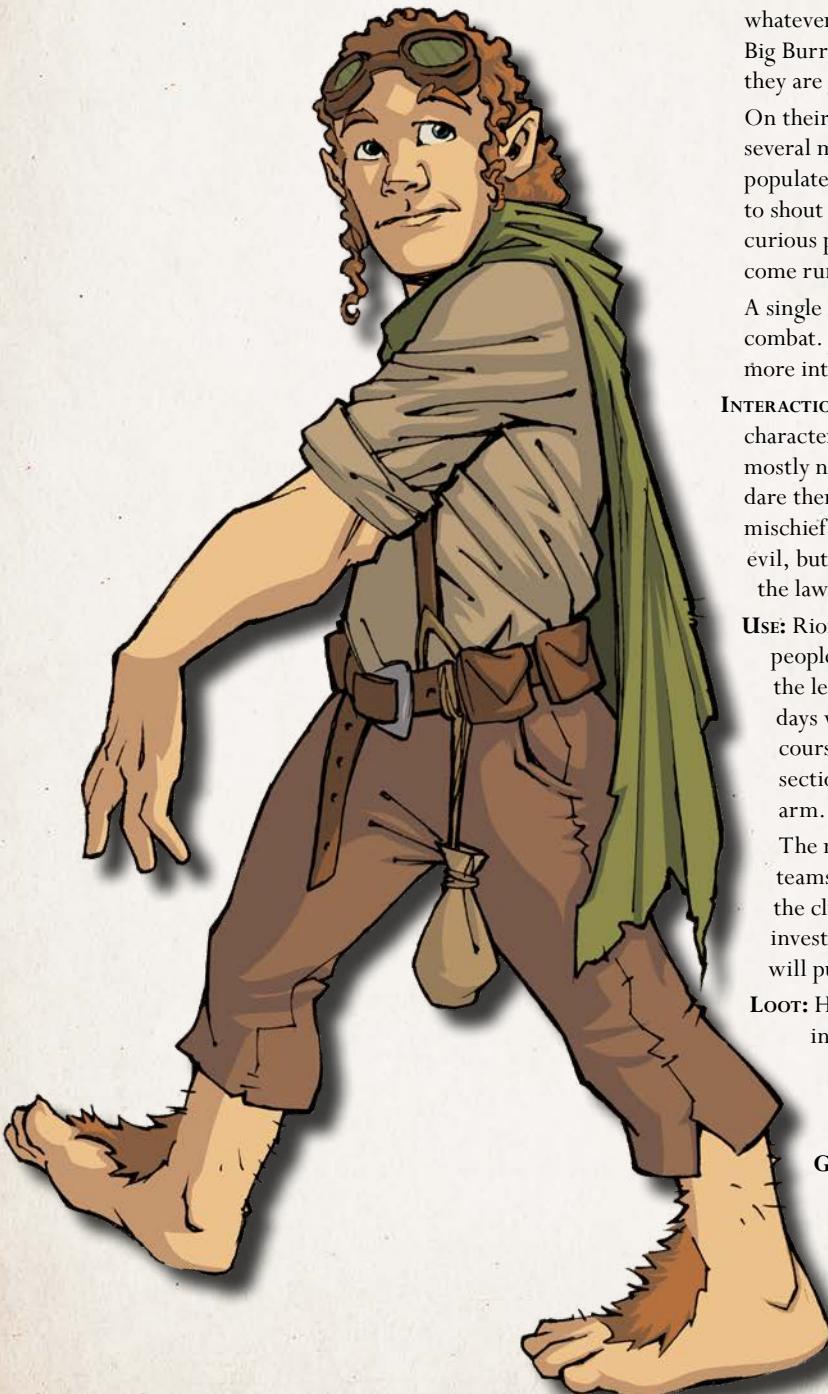
GM INTRUSION: Something kicks in, and the elf gets in a deft strike on a character's neck. The character takes 5 points of damage and falls prone to the ground—stunned—until they can succeed in a difficulty 4 Might-based task to catch their breath and stand up.



HALFLING ~ 1 [3]

Of all the various peoples listed in this book, you're least likely to come into conflict with a halfling. Compared to most of the folk living in Dragon City, halflings are generally happy with their lot in life and willing to let bygones be bygones. Their culture has a strong focus on merriment and forgiveness.

They're short and hairy, but not as short and hairy as dwarves. They're ambitious, but not as ambitious as humans. Rarely do you see an upper-class halfling rich enough to live above Gnometown, but it's even rarer to see one living below the Village either. They are friendly to everyone they meet, and by not exactly fitting into any group outside the Big Burrow they're accepted partially by them all. Even more than humans, halflings have the pleasure of coming and going as they please.



MOTIVE: Varies by person. Generally, halfling civilians just want to live life to the fullest and head where the moment takes them.

ENVIRONMENT: Dragon City.

HEALTH: 3

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 1 point.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 2 due to nimble nature.

Pickpocketing, stealth, and movement tasks as level 2.

COMBAT: A civilian halfling will avoid conflict save for dire, last-ditch situations. A few daring outliers do work to become adventurers, but most halflings are untrained in combat, looking only to protect their businesses and families without too much trouble.

Pushed to the very brink, a halfling will fight, calling on whatever resources they have on hand. But if they're outside the Big Burrow, and the matter isn't of life or death importance, they are just as likely to flee.

On their own turf, all a halfling need do is cry out to bring several more halflings running. Corner a halfling within a populated place in the Burrow, and the halfling has the option to shout out for help instead of attack. All friendly halflings and curious people within a long distance of the halfling's shout come running immediately.

A single halfling can only do 1 point of damage in melee combat. But six of them working together might make for a more interesting fight.

INTERACTION: As opposed to many of the interactions a given character might expect to have in Dragon City, halflings are mostly nice to talk to. They'll buy you a beer, or a dozen if you dare them, and they are down to clown with whatever sort of mischief you might be looking to get up to. Most halflings aren't evil, but if following their bliss means bending or even breaking the law a bit, they won't hesitate.

USE: Riona Desmond, owner of the Right Foot, is worried that people are taking her rugby league too seriously. She started the league as a fun activity to occupy the golfing team on days when the wind was too strong to use the Right Foot's course. Over the years, and to Riona's dismay, the rugby section of the club has slowly expanded to dwarf the golfing arm.

The rumors of magical doping amongst some of the rugby teams was the last straw. Riona has supreme authority within the club, and she is furious. She hires the characters to investigate. Dig up whatever corruption you can, and Riona will put it in the ground.

LOOT: Halflings are far from the most well off of all the races in Dragon City, but most have at least a dozen silver on them. For their travels throughout the city, it's not uncommon for certain civilian halflings to carry around the occasional trinket or cypher as well.

GM INTRUSION: Just when a character seems to have finally isolated a halfling, drawn them away from any potential allies, and gotten the little guy at the edge of their sword, the halfling snaps their fingers, and three more halflings unleash their ambush.

HUMAN ~ 1 [3]

Save for perhaps halflings, humans are widely known as the most accepting and accepted of all the races in Dragon City. The elves still look down on humans for being short-lived and plain-looking, but as a people they're generally welcomed anywhere beneath the Elven Reaches. Most wizards are drawn from the human populace, as are a lot of Auxiliary Guards and adventurers. Their short lifespan and ambitious attitudes make them ideal for the more specialized and dangerous positions available for hire in Dragon City.

Your average civilian human is less of a risk-taker. Barely trained in combat, they probably have a desk job and a small apartment in the Village somewhere. If they're lucky, they have a small family too.

MOTIVE: It truly varies from person to person. Of all the peoples in Dragon City, humans have the most diverse culture, showing influences from their neighbors as well as from the many different nations from which their ancestors originally hailed. Despite that, most are just trying to survive and make their way in the world.

ENVIRONMENT: Dragon City. Most live in the Village, though plenty reside in the Big Burrow and Gnometown as well. Some poorer humans are even welcomed in apartments in Goblintown, while the wealthiest entrepreneurs can afford isolated compounds deep in the Stronghold. And that's not even getting into the numerous human wizards who live in the towers that line Wizards Way.

HEALTH: 4

DAMAGE INFILCTED: 2 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS:

None.

COMBAT: The combat skills a civilian human may have change drastically from combatant to combatant. When a random human NPC first enters a conflict, roll a d6. On a 1 or 2, that NPC has a high constitution, giving them 8 hit points. On a 3 or 4, they're a skilled fighter who deals 3 points of damage per hit. On a 5 or 6, they're a dexterous

person, who has a movement speed of long and a level 3 Speed defense.

INTERACTION: From private eyes and farmers to wizards and desk jockeys, there are thousands of different types of humans in Dragon City and thousands of different ways to interact with them. Same goes for all the other races. It's just that humans have no unifying culture to tie themselves together.

The average human civilian is cooperative but ambitious and self-serving. They're happy to lend a hand to a friend, but if they see an opportunity to move up in the world, however shady, they start weighing the pros and cons.

USE: It's the simplest job in the world. An aspiring young human wizard wants the characters to take her application to the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship's submissions box up in Wizards Way. The party doesn't get half-way there before the assassins start attacking. Someone doesn't want this lady getting into college.

LOOT: Most civilian humans don't have a lot. Search a dead one's pockets, and you might find half a dozen to a dozen silver coins worth of pocket change, and probably some random trinket.

GM INTRUSION: An angry human blacksmith spots a flaw in a character's armor. The blacksmith lands a decisive blow on the armored character, dealing 5 points of armor-ignoring damage.



ORC ~ 2 [6]

Of all the lower classes of Goblintown, orcs have the unfortunate privilege of being the middle child. They're welcome in most gangs but prized in few. Kobolds and goblins tend to be quicker and smaller. Ogres tend to make for better muscle. Orcs are relegated to the position of second fiddle. Occasionally, some group of foolhardy orcs will get the idea to start up an orcs-only gang, only to have their dream violently stamped out by a more established outfit.

Most orcs of fighting age work as grunts in gangs led by the smartest ogres, quickest kobolds, or most ambitious goblins. Every once in a while, the stars align in such a way that an orc can move up to a management position, but for most orcs life in Goblintown is working endless illegal hustles and taking part in the ongoing turf wars with the gangs next door.

It's not a great job. It's not even a good one. But it puts bread on the table, and for most orcs, that's enough. Or it has to be—at least for now.

While they have a bad reputation among the higher echelons of society, orcs are as varied and culturally interesting a folk as you can come across in all of Dragon City. They're much like humans in that respect. It's just that their lives are generally a lot harder.

Orcs contend with more discrimination than anyone else in the city, and they do so on a daily basis, especially if they venture out of Goblintown. Because of this, they're just as aggressive and protective about keeping what's theirs as anyone else in Goblintown—or the rest of Dragon City for that matter.

MOTIVE: Depends on the person.

Living on the tougher side of society, most orcs are just looking to find enough money to get by.

ENVIRONMENT: Dragon City; mostly Goblintown and the Village.

HEALTH: 6

DAMAGE INFlicted: 2 points.

MOVEMENT: Short.

MODIFICATIONS: Persuasion tasks

as level 1 when speaking to elves. Intellect defense against being intimidated as level 4.



COMBAT: Orcs on the street favor knives or small swords—anything that can be quickly sheathed and unsheathed at the first sign of danger. Even the rare orc who favors a long sword usually has a couple of throwing knives tucked in their belt for a fast strike and getaway.

They are not particularly tough as individuals, hence their tendency to form gangs and travel in small groups at almost all times. They attack quickly and at close range, relying on their relative versatility to get them out of tight spots. There are numerous exceptions. The toughest orcs, be they gang leaders or seasoned adventures, like to travel alone. That doesn't mean they can't call on some friends for help when they need it though.

INTERACTION: The orc motto is "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Their customs are obscure, and stepping onto their turf without permission isn't going to make you any fast friends, but if you play by their rules and customs, orcs are like any people: reasonable on the whole. They're quick to react to any perceived slight, but they are no slouches about showing their gratitude for your help either.

USE: Sai, the orc leader of the Gutter Snipers, is at risk of losing her position. Some of her lackeys got greedy. They shot down and looted a shipment they shouldn't have. She needs a group of discerning and discreet adventurers to clean up the scandal quietly before it goes public and brings down the Dragon's wrath on their collective heads.

LOOT: Along with a couple of throwing knives, most orcs have a handful of silver coins in their pockets. Tougher orcs may even have a cypher or two handy.

GM INTRUSION: The orc tosses a smoke bomb on the ground, temporarily blinding any opponents in an immediate distance. For opponents caught in the affected area, the difficulty of all sight-based tasks is increased by one step for the next 10 minutes.

DYING AND THE DEAD IN DRAGON CITY

The people of Dragon City have developed a perfectly sensible fear of the undead, although due to the protection offered by the Emperor and the Great Circle, it's faded into the background a bit over the centuries. You can only live in terror for so long before it starts to pale, and that's certainly become the case with the way the Dragon Emperor's citizens feel about the undead.

In the minds of many people, particularly those living near the Great Circle, zombies are not much worse than rats. No matter what you do to keep them out of your home, they crop up from time to time and make a horrible mess. When they do, you grit your teeth and do your best to exterminate them as thoroughly as you can.

As with rats, the fear is that if you see one zombie, there may be others that have somehow managed to escape your notice. Because of that, citizens are supposed to notify the Imperial Dragon's Guard at the first sign of any undead creatures. In practice, this rarely happens.

When the Guard learns of a zombie sighting, they send in an investigation team. If they manage to verify the sighting, they declare the location infested and work to determine where the zombie came from and if there might be any more of them around. The preferred means of cleansing an area is by fire, and in extreme cases, the Guard has even been known to call in the Dragon Emperor to blast an infested area himself.

Of course, this rarely happens in the Elven Reaches, where the residents are particularly careful to avoid the rise of any undead. The further down the mountain you get, the more likely it is for the Dragon Emperor to take personal and direct action. Such strikes happen in Goblintown every other year or so, but it's been a full century since there have been any large-scale burnings in or above the Stronghold.

BURIAL STANDARDS

When someone dies in Dragon City, the Imperial Dragon's Guard is supposed to be notified immediately. They usually send in a cleanup crew from the city morgue to gather up the body, record the demise and the reason for it, and then dispose of the corpse properly. The regulations are clear and easy to follow.

Bodies that are left unprocessed have a chance of being transformed into zombies by the Ruler of the Dead. Because of this, most deaths are reported immediately, even down in the Village and Goblintown. No one wants to have the Guard knocking down their door to take a body by force. When they do, it rarely ends well for the locals.

Sometimes—usually when the cause of death is not clear cut—the people involved get rid of the body themselves. They feel it's better than being accused of murder, the penalties for which are stiff. Justice comes fast in Dragon City, even if it's not always just.

On top of that, some people just don't want the Guard poking around in their business under any circumstances. Trust in the government is not high in Dragon City, for understandable reasons. Many would prefer to dispose of their own dead. It's not pleasant work, but neither is having to deal with the Guard.

Mostly this happens further down the mountain. The people who live in the Elven Reaches have far too much to lose to consider defying the Dragon Emperor over something as trivial as a corpse.

SO IN BIRTH, AS IN DEATH

The residents of Dragon City know where they fall when it comes to how much the Dragon Emperor pays attention to them. In Goblintown, the Guard doesn't care about the people so much as about preserving some version of order. As many elves would tell you, this is because the peoples of the lower reaches are filthy, overpopulated criminals who require a strong ruling hand to keep them in line.

Elves do have lower birth rates than the other races of Dragon City, but this has more to do with their affluence, long lifespans, and easy access to healthcare. When an elf is born, the news spreads through the Elven Reaches like wildfire, even tumbling down into the city's lower strata. The parents host a massive feast to celebrate, and every elf in the city is invited to join them. The Dragon Emperor himself often makes an appearance at such events, flying overhead and filling the sky with fire.

This serves a dual purpose. It marks the importance of such a happy moment, and it also reminds the celebrants of the Dragon Emperor's power.

While they are otherwise privileged in the legal system, elves suffer the highest penalty for failing to turn over their dead to the Dragon Emperor in a timely manner. If the body of an elf should go missing, one of the family members of the deceased must take their lost relative's place at the morgue. The elves take this penalty seriously, so the law has rarely had to be enforced.

The dwarves might have suffered under a similar stricture, but the Dragon Emperor seems to extend more trust to them. Perhaps that's because the deepest parts of the Stronghold run so deep under Dragon Mountain that even the Emperor would be hard pressed to root out a dwarf desperate to defy his will. Also, even with the full cooperation of everyone involved, dwarven bodies sometimes become lost entirely by circumstance. A great number of dwarven corpses have found their final resting place in collapsed mines deep beneath the Stronghold, forever out of reach.

As for the gnomes, halflings, and so on, the Imperial Dragon's Guard takes care of enforcing the Dragon Emperor's will. Usually a member of the guard can be bought off, but when it comes to the prospect of a zombie outbreak in the city, few of them are interested in bending the law.

OUTBREAKS HAPPEN

Even given these precautions, Dragon City still sees a zombie outbreak happen inside its walls from time to time. It usually begins innocently enough. Someone dies alone, and no one notices. Or somebody kills somebody else, and sloppily disposes of the body.

The people of Dragon City are tough. An able-bodied villager, coming across an isolated zombie in an alleyway may try to put it down on their own. Usually they succeed, but when they don't, they—or at least their body—become part of the problem too.

In the past, the Guard sometimes put out a bounty on zombies. This practice was rescinded when it came out that certain people were taking the opportunity to kill off their enemies, waiting for them to become zombies, and then turning in their now-animated victims for the reward money. These days the Guard prefers to impose penalties on people who don't report undead sightings. If the Guard discovers that someone's been keeping a potential outbreak secret, they toss them in the Garrett long enough that they'll wish the zombies had gotten them instead.



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RETURN TO WHERE DRAGON CITY BEGAN

Every night, legions of zombies scratch at the outer walls of Dragon City, trying to claw their way into the grim and gritty metropolis ruled over by the Dragon Emperor, the mighty beast that keeps the hordes of hungry dead from storming the place and tearing it to the ground. Inside, ex-adventurer Max Gibson—now “Freelance”—tries to keep his head down and enjoy his early retirement, but something keeps digging up parts of his long-buried past.

First he has to rescue an old pal from murder charges. Next he has a run-in with the corrupt Imperial Dragon’s Guard and the dwarven mafia that run the city’s under-mountain. After that, things get much worse, and Max soon finds himself wrapped up in a plot that involves the Dragon Emperor’s young offspring and the fabled leader of the undead hordes herself, the legendary Ruler of the Dead.

With the fate of Dragon City and all its occupants in his hands, what will Max do? Who does he truly care about? And what is he willing to destroy to protect them?



This omnibus edition contains all six *Shotguns & Sorcery* stories written to date. This includes:

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