

ACERERAK'S GUIDE TO LICHDOM



SIGN OF THE DRAGON



Discover secrets, powers and allies of the lich
for the world's greatest roleplaying game

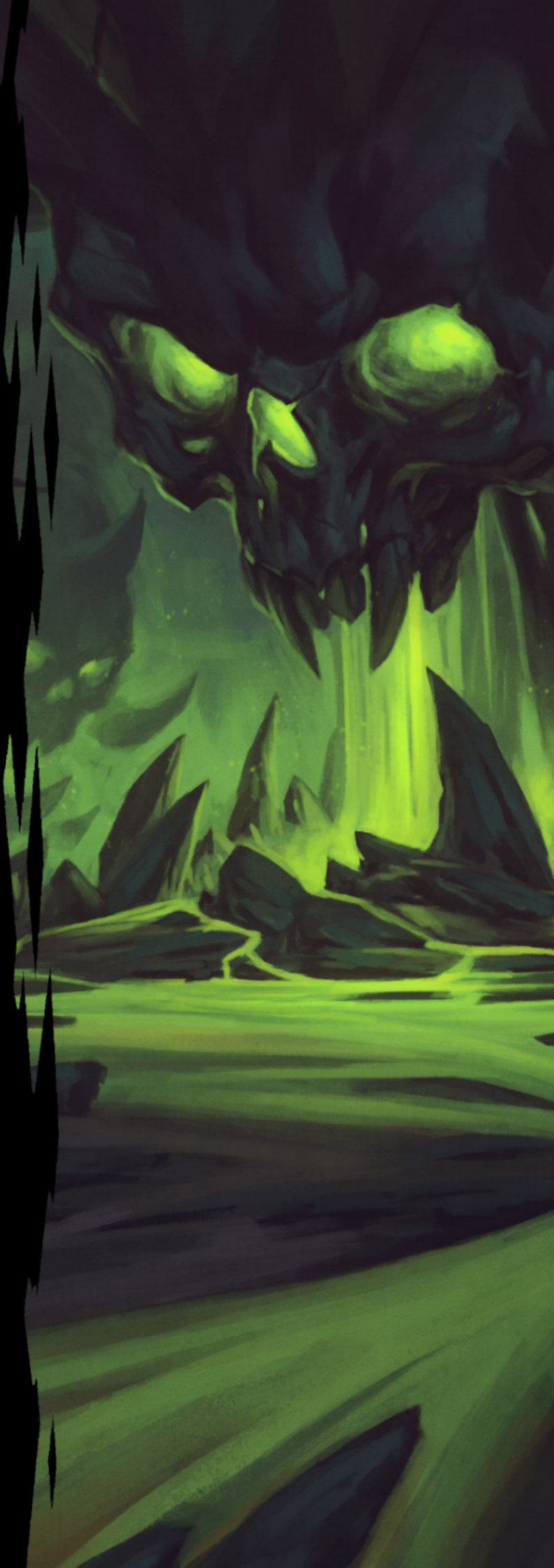
THE SECRETS OF UNDEATH AWAIT YOU

DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF LICHES FROM THE
GREATEST LICH OF ALL: ACERERAK.
ITS WORDS WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE
MAKING OF THIS 31 PAGE MANUSCRIPT.

KEEP READING TO DISCOVER:

- *40 new actions and traits.*
- *4 unique liches ready to be the next great villain of your campaign.*
- *2 new monsters and 1 new NPC.*
- *The Baelnorn: a good elven lich that uses necromancy to protect the clan.*
- *2 new magic items.*
- *5 new traps.*
- *2 detailed maps of lich lairs.*
- *30 images of the highest quality, layed out by a highly skilled specialist.*
- *Hypertext links used in the Table of Contents and throughout the manuscript.*

MARCO BERTINI & MARCO FOSSATI



ACERERAK'S GUIDE TO LICHDOM

MARCO BERTINI & MARCO FOSSATI



SIGN OF THE DRAGON PROJECT



INTRODUCTION



Hi! We are Marco Bertini and Marco Fossati, two Italian guys who share a passion for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS!

Our partnership has developed into the **Sign of the Dragon Project** and **Acererak's Guide to Lichdom** is our second product under this label (you can find our first project, *Vault of Magic*, here: https://www.dmsguild.com/product/288029/Vault-of-Magic?src=hottest_filtered&filters=45469)

We have always been fascinated by undead monsters, especially the intelligent ones. Of the intelligent undead monsters, liches are easily the most fascinating. We wanted to know more about liches and their powers and traits.

We thought that a lich would be the most appropriate source of information on liches, and the most known and knowledgeable lich is Acererak.

We defied the laws of the multiverse and found a way to contact Acererak, who was essential in writing this guide. Luckily, Acererak looked upon our invasion of its privacy with amusement and spared our souls. Unfortunately, Acererak refused to answer some of our questions and often mentioned a baby in a tomb as its reason for not answering. But the answers it did provide are all included in this book.

Cheers,
Marco Bertini & Marco Fossati, **Sign of the Dragon Project**



SPECIAL THANKS

We want to thank all those who have supported us along this path with tips and valuable suggestions! A special thanks goes to Nathanaël Roux for helping us with the editing of 2 images (page 5 and 14).

Created with Homebrewery.

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ON THE COVER

The creation ceremony of the soulskull is still a mystery. Luckily, Acererak has promised us we'll never be involved in it; it said it has other plans for our souls...

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CHAPTER 1: ACTIONS AND TRAITS FOR YOUR LICH

I have brought to lichdom many spellcasters. Each one is different, as each child is different in his father's eyes. For they're all my children, and since I've given them unlife, I can also take it away and cast them into the void where there's nothing but ... Well, maybe I'll show you someday. **Acererak**

The lich shouldn't be just a monster; it should be a great villain, the ultimate enemy at the end of a major campaign. The lich is one of the deadliest creatures in the multiverse, due to its powerful magic, undead nature, very long life (er... unlife), and brilliant intelligence. For all those reasons, each encountered lich should be unique, with its own distinctive traits and ancient powers different from other liches. The 40 actions and traits presented here can help you create your own unique lich.



ACTIONS & REACTIONS

Animate Dead (Bonus Action) (Recharge 6). The lich can cause zombies and skeletons to rise using just its will. These undead creatures have advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead, as long as they are within 200 feet of the lich. The lich may raise up to 12 creatures as long as there are available corpses. The conjured undead obey the lich's telepathic commands, act on its turn, and disappear after 1 hour, when their hit points reach 0, or are dismissed by the lich.

Bone Command (Action) (3/Day). The lich can animate bones and shape them at will for 10 minutes. It chooses to use *Bone Barrier* or *Create Structure*. The lich can dismiss the effect on its turn as a bonus action.

Bone Barrier. The lich draws splinters of bone it can see and animates them into a protective barrier as per the *blade barrier* spell for 10 minutes. Bone Barrier does not have a concentration requirement.

Create Structure. The lich forms bones into a structure if there are enough bones available. Common structures that can be created are huts, arches, bridges, and so forth. The DM determines the structure's stability and size according to the type and amount of bones available. The structure lasts until destroyed or the lich dismisses it with a bonus action. The DM also determines the hit points and the resistance of the bone structure. In general, a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) ability check will breach a bone wall.

Chilling Wind (Action) (Recharge 5-6). The lich creates a freezing 60-foot cone of wind. Each creature in the 60-foot cone takes 22 (4d10) cold damage and must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat their saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition with a success. Once a target has succeeded on its saving throw, they are immune to the frightened condition caused by Chilling Wind for the next 24 hours.

Coldfire Ray (Action). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take an additional 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

Conjure Undead Legion (Action) (1/Day). The lich summons undead creatures that appear at the beginning of its next turn in unoccupied spaces that the lich can see within 120 feet. It can summon one of the following:

- 12 undead of CR 1 or lower
- 6 undead of CR 3 or lower
- 3 undead of CR 5 or lower
- 1 undead of CR 9 or lower

The conjured undead obey the lich's telepathic commands, acting on its turn, and they disappear after 1 hour, when their hit points reach 0, or are dismissed by the lich.

Doom Gaze (Action) (1/Day). The lich fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet. If the creature has 50 hp or less, it dies. Otherwise, it takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

Grasp of Death (Action). The lich's hand is surrounded by a dark purple chilling aura. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target has 50 hp or fewer, it must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or die. On a success, the target is immune to this action for the next 24 hours.

Grasp of Enfeeblement (Action). The lich's hand becomes black and emanates little dark flames. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. On a hit, the target is chilled and only deals half damage with weapon attacks that use Strength and it has disadvantage on Strength ability checks for 1 minute. At the end of each of its following turns, the target can make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw to remove the chilled effect.

Ignore Metal (Bonus Action) (1/Day). For 1 minute the lich passes through metal harmlessly by magically putting itself slightly out of dimensional phase. It also gains immunity from physical damage caused by metal attacks, but it still takes damage equal to the enchantment bonus of the weapon. For example, a lich using Ignore Metal takes only 2 points of damage when hit by a steel *longsword* +2. A lich using Ignore Metal can also pass through solid metals as if it were incorporeal.

Imitate Spell (Reaction) (3/Day). If the lich is the target of a spell which is also on the wizard spell list, then the lich can immediately cast the spell at a target of its choosing. This imitated spell has the same statistics as the spell copied, to include the spell save DC, area of effect, etc. The lich does not need to have the imitated spell prepared to use this reaction.

Limited Flying (Bonus Action). The lich gains a flying speed of 15 feet. This movement speed can be used until the end of its next turn.

Magic Item Mastery (Action) (2/Day). The lich can activate the powers of two magic items that it is carrying.

Necrotic Surge (Action) (3/Day). A black aura bursts out from the lich and each creature within a 30-foot-radius of the lich takes 21 (6d6) necrotic damage or half damage if they succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. The lich regains hit points based on the total amount of necrotic damage dealt, up to its hit point maximum.

Painwrack Gaze (Action). The lich fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet. The target takes 21 (6d6) psychic damage or half damage if it succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw.

Poison Arrow (Action). A green blast erupts from the lich's hand. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) poison damage. A hit target must also make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or gain the poisoned condition for 1 minute.



At the end of each of its following turns, the target can attempt another saving throw to remove the poisoned condition.

Reactive Spellcasting (Reaction). When the lich is hit by an attack, it can use its reaction to cast a spell of 3rd level or lower that has a casting time of 1 action.

Undead Shape (Bonus Action) (1/Day). The lich assumes the shape of an undead creature of CR 10 or lower. The lich can maintain this shape for 1 hour. In all other aspects, this feature is otherwise identical to the druid's wild shape class feature.

Vortex of Evil (Action) (1/Week). The lich summons fiends that appear at the beginning of its next turn in an unoccupied space that it can see within 120 feet. It can choose to summon one of the following:

- 1 fiend of CR 15 or lower
- 2 fiends of CR 10 or lower
- 4 fiends of CR 5 or lower
- 8 fiends of CR 3 or lower

The summoned fiends obey the lich's telepathic commands, acting on its turn, and they disappear after 1 hour, when they drop to 0 hp, or are dismissed by the lich as a bonus action.

TRAITS

Advanced Concentration. The lich can concentrate on two spells at once. If something breaks the lich's concentration, then the lich must roll a concentration check for each spell, but it has advantage on both checks.

Anti-Magic (3/Day). When the lich casts *counterspell* or *dispel magic*, if it fails the ability check, it can choose to succeed instead.

At Will Spells. The lich casts spells of 2nd level or lower without consuming spell slots.

Double Spell (1/Day). The lich casts two spells when it takes the Cast a Spell Action. Each cast spell consumes the appropriate spell slot.

Dream Manipulation. The lich, if it knows the exact location of a living humanoid creature, can infiltrate that creature's dreams. The lich normally manipulates the dream by turning it into a nightmare. The target makes a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, and if it fails then it receives no benefit from its short or long rest. The target is aware that something manipulated its dreams. If the lich manipulates the same creature's dreams for a week, then that creature suffers from a long term madness randomly determined by the DM. Madness is further described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Elemental Adept. When the lich hits a creature with a spell attack, that creature takes 11 (3d6) additional energy damage. The lich can choose acid, fire, or lightning as the type of additional energy damage.

Elemental Immunity. The lich is immune to cold, fire, and lightning damage.

Evasive Movement. The lich's movement doesn't cause opportunity attacks.

First Strike. The lich has advantage on initiative rolls.

Fool's Feast. The lich taints all food within 5 feet of it. A creature that eats the tainted food must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour and suffered 45 (10d8) poison damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not poisoned.

Gem of Body and Soul. The lich binds its essence to an enchanted gem of at least 1,000 gp value. If the gem is within 120 feet of the lich, then half of any damage the lich would take is instead magically transferred to the gem. The gem has 100 hp and when reduced to 0 it disintegrates. It takes 1 week for the lich to craft a new Gem of Body and Soul and it can't possess more than one gem at time.

Improved Defense. The lich has damage resistance against bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks.

Improved Spellcasting. The lich has 6 spell slots to cast 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level spells. The lich also knows 6 Cantrips

Innate Spellcasting. The lich's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells:

At will: *eldritch blast*

3/day: *arms of Hadar*

1/day: *hunger of Hadar*

Magic Resistance. The lich has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Master of Undead. Each other undead creature of CR 5 or lower that can see the lich is immune to any effect that turns undead.

Powerful Spells. When the lich makes a successful spell attack, the target creature is vulnerable to that damage.

Regeneration. The lich regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If it starts its turn with 0 hp it doesn't regenerate.

Special Equipment. The lich carries some magic items, which are usually just wands and staves. This lich has more magical items than usual and will have at least one useful ring, wondrous item, or an item from Appendix A.

Skull Scry. The lich can hear or see as the *clairvoyance* spell through any skull that the lich is aware of up to 200 miles away.

Undead Toughness. The lich's Constitution is 20 (+5) and it has 180 (18d8 + 90) hit points. Its Constitution saving throw is +12 and it has advantage on Constitution saving throws.

Voice of Maleficence. The lich can chose to make any listener within 30 feet of it make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for the next 24 hours if the target has been listening for at least a minute. While charmed, the creature reveals any secret that it knows. The lich can dismiss the effect whenever it wants.

CHAPTER 2: TACTICS

A lich can use its physical attacks in combat, but it is its intelligence and spell power that truly makes a lich fearsome. A lich has many damage immunities and resistances which can balance out its mediocre hit points and AC when compared to other CR 21 creatures. This chapter will describe other strengths, weaknesses, and tactics that a lich can use to fight and destroy the characters.

LAIR

A lich has access to powerful lair actions when it's encountered in its lair. A lich will only rarely leave its lair because it will want to force foes through a variety of traps and minions. This allows a lich to fight a weakened or exhausted foe. [Appendix C](#) gives you some examples of traps found in lich lairs. They were created following the guidelines included in the *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

Two lich lair maps are included on [page 30](#) and [page 31](#).

AGENTS & MINIONS

AT YOUR SERVICE, OH DARK LORD!

A typical lich's group of servants should include:

- 1d3 wizards
- 1d4 intelligent undead
- 1d3 elementals
- 1d2 constructs
- 6d4 undead

Most servants will remain in the lich's lair. Chapter 2 only shows servants mentioned by Acererak, but liches will make use of whatever servants they can find or make.



A lich will always have a few agents in its service; creatures trusted to enforce its will in the lair or outside of it. The following table will allow you to randomly select agents that serve a lich.

d8 Agents

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Wizards |
| 2 | Intelligent Undead |
| 3 | Fiends |
| 4 | Elementals |
| 5 | Slaadi |
| 6 | Undead |
| 7 | Constructs |
| 8 | Humanoids |



Wizards. A wizard that serves a lich is hoping to gain access to ancient magical knowledge or powers. You can use the **mage** or **archmage** stat blocks of the *Monster Manual* or you can choose among the NPCs presented in [Appendix B](#).

Intelligent Undead. These undead creatures have an Intelligence ability score of 10 or higher. Typical creatures are **flameskulls**, **wraiths**, or **ghosts** that come and go from the lich's lair at its command. Very powerful liches can also have other liches among their agents. [Appendix B](#) gives an example of intelligent undead serving a lich.

Fiends. Minor devils and demons can also serve a lich. They are chained to their master by some magical means or they are part of a deal between the lich and a greater fiend.

Elementals. Through magical means, a **djinni**, **effreeti**, or **invisible stalker** has been bound to the lich's will. The elemental creature is used for tasks outside its lair or as a powerful lair guard.

Slaadi. One or more slaadi, with the lich possessing their controlling gems, are typical servants of creatures like the lich

Undead. Liches commonly use low intelligence undead, like **skeletons**, **ghouls**, and **zombies**. These monsters are used as servants inside the lair or as a destructive force outside the lair if led by more intelligent servants or agents.

Constructs. Liches commonly make use of constructs, especially **golems**, **helmed horrors**, or **shield guardians**. Liches more than any other spellcasting creature have the magical might, time, and resources to create powerful constructs.

Humanoids. A tribe of goblinoids or desperate humanoids will often swear fealty to the lich, usually out of fear or simple survival. These humanoids protect the area around the lich's lair and are the first scouts or fodder used by a lich if it wants to raid or conquer land. Humanoids that fall in battle are often drug back to the lair to be raised as skeletons or zombies.



MAGIC

The lich is a master spellcaster with access to the most powerful forgotten spells, ancient magic items, and relics of a past era.

According to the treasure tables in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the lich's lair usually contains between two to six magic items. A lich with the *Special Equipment* trait described in Chapter 1 will often use any magical items that are useful, especially any very rare or legendary magic items.

Since the lich is usually very old, spells and items found in its lair are a good way to introduce new spells or unique items. You can create some on your own or take inspiration from our *Vault of Magic* product or the upcoming *Vault of Magic: volume II*.

PERSONALITY

Because of its mighty powers, the lich doesn't fear anything or anybody. The lich often won't meddle in mortal affairs, but powerful monsters tend to attract unwanted attention. If the lich thinks that some distraction is actually a menace, it will crush it immediately and without hesitation. If threatened by something it doesn't consider to be a threat, then the lich will also crush it immediately so that it can focus its attention on something else.

The lich tends to be insane by usual standards, obsessed by magic and power, and very arrogant due to its magical might.

You should change the suggested lich spells in the *Monsters Manual*, for some of its spells are useless (*detect magic*, *detect thoughts*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, etc.). Each lich should be unique and different. They should not be using the same spell lists.

The lich is a very old creature that has access to powerful and ancient magic. Some traits presented in Chapter 1, such as *Advanced Concentration*, *At Will Spells*, or *Improved Spellcasting*, are useful for transforming a generic lich into a unique lich with strange magical powers.

SPELLS

For such a powerful spellcaster, the lich only has one spell slot for spell-levels 6th through 9th. Therefore, a lich will be very selective of which spell it chooses to use in these higher level slots. A lich will not normally use a higher level spell slot to boost a lower level spell unless it is absolutely necessary. Liches will normally use magic scrolls for utility spells, leaving most of its spell slots for destruction or control spells.

You should also consider altering the spell slots listed in the *Monster Manual* but doing so may increase the CR of the new lich.

The lich will always keep one 2nd-level spell slot and one 4th-level spell slot for the exclusive use of *invisibility* and *dimension door*. A lich will only fight to the death to defend its phylactery.



WEAKNESSES

Liches have a few weaknesses but they often use their genius to devise ways to overcome these shortcomings. Liches tend to have lower hit points than other CR 21 or 22 creatures and will boost their hit points with spells, traits, or magic items whenever possible. [Chapter 1](#) gives a list of traits, such as *Undead Toughness*, *Regeneration*, or *Gem of the Soul* that will help increase a lich's hit points. The action, *Necrotic Surge*, will also quickly replace lost hit points for the lich. A shield guardian is always useful to a lich, since it absorbs half of the damage inflicted against the lich.

You can increase the resistances of the lich by assigning the Improved Resistance, Elemental Immunity, or Magic Resistance traits found in [Chapter 1](#).

The most potent weakness of any lich is its insane personality. For example, the lich is so arrogant that it often does not check to see if a powerful minion managed to destroy a perceived threat or it will underestimate a threat's ability to actually cause it harm. Its obsession for more magic and power often leads the lich towards its own destruction.



CHAPTER 3: LICHES AS BIG VILLAINS

The liches presented here are good examples of how the lich in the *Monster Manual* can be modified by using the actions and traits in [Chapter 1](#) and the suggestions of [Chapter 2](#).

A lich that has been modified by the actions and traits of this work will usually have a higher CR than the lich found in the *Monster Manual*. These liches should be used as the ultimate villain of a long story arc or an entire campaign of yours. The spells in this section that are in **bold and italics** are found in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

CONALL, MASTER OF UNDEAD

To move again what should be still...
To give back life where only death
would reign. To hear again voices that
should be forever lost. Wouldn't that
be the voice of the gods themselves?

- Conall

Conall is a lich that has mastered the undead. It thinks of itself as Lord of the Undead and it is searching for a way to become a god of all undead things.

Undead Bodyguards. Some undead creatures are always near Conall, ready to defend it against any attack. Refer to the side box to know its servants. Conall's bodyguards will fight until destroyed.

Enemies in Life, Allies in Death. Conall delights in transforming fallen foes into undead servants. If Conall can use reanimated foes to haunt the friends and relatives of the slain, then it will do so.

Undead Nature. Conall doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

CONALL'S ARMY

Conall has 12 **skeletons** near it at all times, led by a **wight**. When not given a specific task, they will patrol Conall's lair. Outside of the lair are 12 **ghouls** and a **ghast** that guard and patrol near the entrance.

Conall was always interested in the dead and in death itself. When it was a young boy it used to work in a cemetery and started talking with the newly arrived corpses. But in the end, it got bored with their lack of response and it began to research a method to speak with the dead. Conall eventually discovered Necromancy, but it will always be nothing but an amateur; Conall creates the undead while I create gods.

- Acererak



CONALL

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis +9

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Elvish, Abyssal, Infernal, Draconic, Primordial

Challenge CR 22 (41,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Conall fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Master of Undead. Each other undead creature of CR 5 or lower that can see Conall is immune to any effect that turns undead.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, Conall gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of Conall's phylactery.

Special Equipment. Conall carries a *boneward* and a *soulskull* (see Appendix A).

Spellcasting. Conall is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *ray of frost*, *toll the dead*

1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, *Melf's acid arrow*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *dimension door*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill*, *danse macabre*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *plane shift*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster*, *maddening darkness*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Turn Resistance. Conall has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Actions

Animate Dead (Recharge 6). As a bonus action, Conall can cause zombies and skeletons to rise with its will.

Such creatures have advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead, as long as they are within 200 feet of it. Conall may raise up to 12 creatures as long as there are available corpses. The conjured undead obey Conall's telepathic commands, acting on its turn, and they disappear after 1 hour, when their hit points reach 0, or are dismissed by Conall.

Bone Command (3/Day). Conall can animate bones and shape it at will. It chooses one of the following effects, which both lasts 10 minutes. The lich can dismiss the effect on its turn as a bonus action.

Bone Barrier. The lich draws splinters of bone it can see and animates them into a protective barrier as per the *blade barrier* spell for 10 minutes. Bone Barrier does not have a concentration requirement.

Create Structure. The lich forms bones into a structure if there are enough bones available. Common structures that can be created are huts, arches, bridges and so forth. The DM determines the structure's stability and size according to the type and amount of bones available. The structure lasts until destroyed or the lich dismisses it with a bonus action. The DM also determines the hp and the resistance of the bone structure. In general, a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) ability check will breach a bone wall.

Grasp of Death. Melee Spell Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target has 50 hp or less, it must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or die. On a success, the target is immune to this action for the next 24 hours.

Legendary Actions

Conall can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. Conall casts a cantrip.

Bone Command (Costs 2 Actions). Conall uses its Bone Command.

Grasp of Death (Costs 2 Actions). Conall uses its Grasp of Death.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Conall fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, then the target is immune to Conall's Frightening Gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Conall must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



DHARASH, THE MASTERMIND

**I'm the bogey man of your nightmares.
I'm the secret behind another secret.
No one can trace me or connect me to
any agent of mine. As a matter of fact,
you are all pawns that work for me,
without even knowing it.**

- Dharash

Dharash prefers to lurk behind the scenes and rarely acts directly. It's a schemer that delights in tormenting its enemies from afar by the use of magic or its agents. Dharash tries to avoid direct contact if at all possible and is quick to flee when confronted.

Careful Observer. Dharash dedicates a lot of its time scrying on its enemies, possible dangers, and all nearby adventurers. By doing so, it always knows the strengths and weaknesses of any potential opponents.

Mischievous Plotter. Dharash loves to create intricate plots around adventurers often just to watch how they succeed or fail against its agents.

Undead Nature. Dharash doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

DHARASH'S ARMY

Dharash's agents include an **invisible stalker**, a **djinni**, a **shadow demon**, and a **bleak necromancer**. A **shield guardian** is always at its side. Outside its lair, a tribe of **kobolds** revere it as a demigod and serve it by scouting the surrounding area.



Dharash pretends to be an unknown power that manipulates its many puppets while standing offstage. It can play silly games with mortals and brainless flesh with no wit. But that half-wit can't fool me! Dharash has no clue what real power is.

- Acererak

DHARASH

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis +9

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Elvish, Abyssal, Infernal, Draconic, Primordial

Challenge CR 22 (41,000 XP)

Dream Manipulation. Dharash, if it knows the exact location of a living humanoid creature, can infiltrate that creature's dreams. Dharash normally manipulates the dream by turning it into a nightmare. The creature makes a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, and if it fails then it receives no benefit from its short or long rest. The target is aware that something manipulated its dreams. If Dharash manipulates the same creature's dreams for a week, then that creature suffers from a long term madness randomly determined by the DM. Madness is further described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Evasive Movement. Dharash's movement doesn't cause opportunity attacks.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Dharash fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, Dharash gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of Dharash's phylactery.

Special Equipment. Dharash carries an *amulet of the planes*, a *ring of the ram*, and a *soulskull* (described in Appendix A).

Spellcasting. Dharash is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard Spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *ray of frost*, *toll the dead*
1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility*, *mind spike*, *mirror image*, *misty step*
3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*
4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*, *phantasmal killer*

5th level (3 slots): *dream*, *far step*, *geas*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *plane shift*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Skull Scry. Dharash can hear or see as the *clairvoyance* spell through any skull that it is aware of up to 200 miles away.

Turn Resistance. Conall has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Actions

Limited Flying. As a bonus action, Dharash gains flying speed 15 feet until the end of its next turn.

Painwrack Gaze. Dharash fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet. The target takes 21 (6d6) psychic damage or half as much damage if it succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw.

Bone Barrier. The lich draws splinters of bone it can see and animates them into a protective barrier as per the *blade barrier* spell. Bone Barrier does not have a concentration requirement.

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Legendary Actions

Dharash can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of its turn..

Cantrip. Dharash casts a cantrip.

Painwrack Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Dharash uses its Painwrack Gaze.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). Dharash uses its Paralyzing Touch.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Dharash fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Dharash's Frightening Gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Dharash must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



KHARADOSZ, THE JUGGERNAUT

I don't care who you are or how strong you are. I'm better than you, always and forever. I'll crush you with ease and I'll trap your soul for eternity.

- Kharadosz

Kharadosz wants to be an invincible being amongst all creatures. It has focused most of its magic resources improving its resistances and invincibility in battle.

Strength and Resistance. Kharadosz is tougher than a normal lich. Most attacks and spells do little or no damage to it.

Overconfidence. Kharadosz usually faces its opponents directly in combat, trusting in its resiliency and invincibility. Kharadosz will often place itself in the area of effect of its own spells.

Undead Nature. Kharadosz doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

KHARADOSZ'S ARMY

Kharadosz servants include an **efreeti** and 2 **flameskulls**. A **stone golem** is always inside its lair, and a tribe of **orcs** is at its orders for raids or attacks against its opponents.



RSPARS

Kharadosz is a nice puppy. But this puppy bites like a hound. It thinks it's invincible but I can take its soul with a thought!

- Acererak

KHARADOSZ

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor, ring of protection)

Hit Points 180 (18d8 + 90)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Saving Throws Str +1, Dex +5, Con +14, Int +13, Wis +10, Cha +4

Damage Resistances necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Primordial, Elvish, Draconic, Abyssal, Infernal

Challenge CR 23 (50,000 XP)

Elemental Immunity. Kharadosz is immune to cold, fire and lightning damage.

Gem of Body and Soul. Kharadosz binds its essence to an enchanted gem of at least 1,000 gp value. If the gem is within 120 feet of it, then half of any damage Kharadosz would take is instead magically transferred to the gem. The gem has 100 hp and when reduced to 0 it disintegrates. It takes 1 week for Kharadosz to craft a new Gem of Body and Soul and it can't possess more than one gem at time.

Improved Defense. Kharadosz has damage resistance against bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from magical attacks.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Kharadosz fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Regeneration. Kharadosz regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If it starts its turn with 0 hp it doesn't regenerate.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, Kharadosz gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of Kharadosz's phylactery.

Special Equipment. Kharadosz carries a *necklace of fireballs*, a *ring of protection*, and a *soulskull* (see Appendix A).

Spellcasting. Kharadosz is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *ray of frost*, *toll the dead*

1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *Aganazzar's scorcher*, *darkness*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *dimension door*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *immolation*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *Mordenkainen's sword*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Turn Resistance. Kharadosz has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Undead Toughness. Kharadosz's Constitution is 20 (+5) and it has 180 (18d8 + 90) hit points. Its Constitution saving throw is +13 and it has advantage on Constitution saving throws.

Actions

Necrotic Surge (3/Day). A black aura bursts out from Kharadosz and each creature within a 30-foot-radius of the lich takes 21 (6d6) necrotic damage or half damage if they succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. Kharadosz regains hit points based on the total amount of necrotic damage dealt, up to its hit point maximum.

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Legendary Actions

Kharadosz can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. Kharadosz casts a cantrip.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). Kharadosz uses its Paralyzing Touch.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Kharadosz fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Kharadosz's gaze for the next 24 hours.

Necrotic Surge (Costs 2 Actions). Kharadosz uses its Necrotic Surge.

VALERIAS, THE MISTRESS OF SPELLS

There's more magic in the multiverse than what you can imagine. I've discovered much of it but there is still more to be seized. I'm not in a hurry. I can wait, for I have all the time death has granted me.

- Valerias

Valerias was once a powerful spellcaster renowned for her ability to craft new spells and ways of channeling magic.

Arcane Powers. During the many years of its lichdom, Valerias has developed strange new magics and discovered ancient and forgotten spells.

Magic Lust. Valerias is always in search of new arcane secrets, magic items, and spells. It keeps an eye on powerful spellcasters and apprentices in order to steal any new secrets that it does not yet possess.

Undead Nature. Valerias doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

VALERIA'S ARMY

2 bleak necromancers and 3 lich's initiates (see Appendix C) are Valerias' underlings. A shield guardian and a shadowguard (see Appendix C) are always inside its lair.



Valerias thinks that real magic resides in the ancient arcane powers it has discovered in the past few centuries. It pretends to be a very powerful sorcerer, which is proof that idle people tell themselves the best lies. A below average wizard it is, easily eclipsed by my power.

- Acererak



VALERIAS

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor, ring of protection)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Saving Throws Str +1, Dex +5, Con +12, Int +13, Wis +10, Cha +4

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan, Draconic, Abyssal, Infernal, Primordial, Celestial

Challenge CR 23 (50,000 XP)

Advanced Concentration. Valerias can concentrate on two spells at once. If something breaks its concentration, Valerias must make one concentration check for each spell. Valerias has advantage on both concentration checks.

At Will Spells. Valerias casts spells of 2nd level or lower without consuming spell slots.

Elemental Adept. When Valerias hits a creature with a spell attack, that creature takes 11 (3d6) additional energy damage. Valerias can choose acid, fire, or lightning as the type of additional energy damage.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Valerias fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Valerias has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed, Valerias gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of Valerias' phylactery.

Special Equipment. Valerias carries a *staff of the magic*, a *ring of protection*, and a *soulskull* (see Appendix A for details).

Spellcasting. Valerias is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +14 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *ray of frost*, *toll the dead*
1st level (at will): *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*
2nd level (at will): *Aganazzar's scorcher*, *cloud of daggers*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *dimension door*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *immolation*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *Mordenkainen's sword*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Turn Resistance. Valerias has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Actions

Coldfire Ray. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take an additional 10 (3d6) necrotic damage

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success

Reactions

Reactive Spellcasting. When Valerias is hit by an attack, it can use its reaction to cast a spell of 3rd level or lower which has a casting time of 1 action

Legendary Actions

Valerias can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of its turn.

At will spells. Valerias casts a spell of 2nd level or lower without consuming spell slots.

Coldfire Ray (Costs 2 Actions). Valerias uses its Coldfire Ray.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). Valerias fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Valerias' gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Valerias must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



APPENDIX A: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

The following two magic items are examples of some arcane objects that can be found in a lich's lair and are often used by them. These items will also appear in our upcoming Vault of Magic volume II.

BONEWAND

Wand, rare (requires attunement by an spellcaster)

This magic wand has 5 charges. If attuned to the bonewand, you can spend two charges as an action. This action will cause an eruption of bone shards from the tip of the wand. Each creature in a 30-foot cone, originating from the wand, takes 17 (5d6) piercing damage, or half as much damage if the target succeeds at a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Using an action and a charge from the wand, you can cast one of the following spells: *animate dead* or *speak with dead*. The wand recharges 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn.



R5PEARS

SOULSKULL

Wondrous item, very rare

This magic item is created using a now forgotten evil process that forces a sentient creature's soul to be permanently contained within its own skull. The skull is then harvested from the dead creature to become a soulskull. You can use an action to absorb the soul imprisoned in the skull, which destroys the soulskull and heals you up to your hit point maximum. Once used, the skull disintegrates and the soul is lost forever.

*"O little soul,
where will thou go
when thou are no more?
Which games will thou play?
Where will be thine eyes,
when I'll have no more mine?"
- Maxellianus, the Emperor Poet*

APPENDIX B: NEW MONSTERS & NPCs

The following monsters and NPCs are examples of typical servants and agents of a lich and a new type of lich, the elven lich, commonly called a baelnorn.

BAELNORN

I chose this path not for glory nor for desire to dominate life and death. I'm very loyal to my House and this eternal sacrifice is the purest form of loyalty.

- **Laerraelon of House Starym, baelnorn of Myth Drannor**

Baelnorns are elves who have sought undeath to serve their families, communities, or other purposes (usually to see a wrong righted or to achieve a certain magical discovery or deed). They are lichlike creatures that appear as tall, impressive looking elves with shriveled skin and glowing white eyes.

Isolated dwellers. Most baelnorns keep to the crypts, ruins, or mage towers they guard or work in. A baelnorn is never seen by outsiders unless by trespassers to one of those ancient places.

Brilliant faithful guardians. A baelnorn spends its existences diligently working at whatever task it finds important enough to endure undeath for. If it guards a place or an item of power, then a baelnorn typically spends centuries laying traps, placing items at the ready, setting spell triggers, creating or summoning guardian monsters, and formulating defensive strategies.

Undead nature. A baelnorn doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep



BAELNORN

Medium undead, lawful good

Armor Class 18 (natural armor, ring of protection)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +19, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +10

Saving Throws Str +1, Dex +5, Con +12, Int +13, Wis +11, Cha +4

Damage Immunities cold, lightning, necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Elvish, Common, plus up to five other languages

Challenge CR 21 (33,000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The baelnorn's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

(3/day): *project image*

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the baelnorn fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The baelnorn has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effect.

Special Equipment. The baelnorn carries a *ring of protection* and a *wand of lightning bolts*.

Spellcasting. The baelnorn is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *ray of frost*, *toll the dead*
1st level (4 slots): *catapult*, *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *dragon's breath*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *shadow blade*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *haste*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *dimension door*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *dawn*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *Mordenkainen's sword*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Actions

Painwrack Gaze. The baelnorn fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The creature must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Turn Undead (3/Day). Each undead that can see or hear the baelnorn within 30 feet of it must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until takes damage.

A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from the baelnorn as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of it. It also can't take reactions. For its action it can only use the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action. If the undead that fails its saving throw is of CR ½ or lower, that creature is instantly destroyed.

Legendary Actions

The baelnorn can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. The baelnorn casts a cantrip.

Painwrack Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). The baelnorn uses its Painwrack Gaze.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). The baelnorn uses its Paralyzing Touch.

Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions). The baelnorn fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the baelnorn gaze for the next 24 hours.

Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions). Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of the baelnorn must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Baelnorns simply mock
the perfection of a lich.

- Acererak

BLEAK NECROMANCER

Do you want to know why I serve my lord? I could tell you about power, magic, gold, fear, or even desire for ancient knowledge; but I won't lie to you. I'll tell you the truth, my truth; I serve it because I'm utterly evil and I'm fascinated by it.

- Domna, bleak necromancer follower of Valerias

Wizards seek the guidance of a lich because they are fascinated by the secrets of the dead and because they delight in the macabre rites.

Hard Training. Only the most disciplined and the devious wizards can survive the many tests a lich presents to them. Those who fail are killed or sacrificed by the others in hideous rites and are usually transformed into a *soulskull* (see Appendix A) or a **shadowguard**.

Dead Appearance. Bleak necromancers pass a lot of their time among corpses and they tend to reek and have very pale skin covered with bloodstained and fouled clothing.



BLEAK NECROMANCER

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 83 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Religion +7, Intimidation +5

Saving Throws Con +6, Int +7

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Condition Immunities Abyssal, Common, Infernal

Senses CR 7 (2,900 XP)

Grave Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the bleak necromancer must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Spellcasting. The bleak necromancer is an 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, **frostbite**, *ray of frost*, **toll the dead**

1st level (4 slots): *cause fear*, *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness*, *mind spike*, *ray of sickness*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*

5th level (1 slot): **negative energy flood**

Actions

Multiattack. The bleak necromancer makes two death bolt attacks

Death Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) necrotic damage. On a successful hit the target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, target creature is pushed 10 feet away from the bleak necromancer in a straight line.

Enervating Burst (Recharges 5-6). As an action, the bleak necromancer causes a burst of black energy that radiates out in a 15-foot-radius centered on it. Any creature that isn't undead or a construct must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (2d10 + 7) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is also slowed, per the *slow* spell for 1 minute. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its following turns, ending the effect on a success.

LICH INITIATE

Only two things are infinite in the multiverse: death and fools seeking dark secrets.

- Acererak

Wizards that are beginning on their path to become bleak necromancers are called lich Initiates.

Cannon Fodder. A lich will use an initiate however it pleases. They perform dangerous experiments, spy on the outside world, feed more important minions, or die for a whim.

Ruthless Motivation. Lich initiates are motivated to rise in power quickly, often at the expense of each other. They eagerly perform any tasks given by their master and fanatically try to complete it.



LICH INITIATE

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Skills Arcana +5, History +5, Religion +5

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +5

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

Challenge CR 5 (1,800 XP)

Fanatic Advantage. Once per turn, if the lich initiate can see its lich master, it makes a spell attack with advantage on the attack roll. On a successful hit, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage of the same type damage of that spell.

Lich Fanatic. The lich initiate has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Spellcasting. The lich initiate is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *frostbite*, *ray of frost*, *tol the dead*

1st level (4 slots): *cause fear*, *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness*, *mind spike*, *ray of sickness*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*

4th level (1 slot): *blight*

Actions

Grave Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) necrotic damage.

Decay Burst (Recharges 5-6). As a bonus action, a burst of black energy radiates from the lich initiate in a 15-foot-radius centered on it. Any creature that isn't an undead or construct must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the affected creature is vulnerable to necrotic damage until the start of its next turn.



SHADOWGUARD

Shadowguards won't rise to play nor to dance. Shadowguards rise only to guard and to kill. I know this well, because I created them.

- Acererak

Shadowguards are minions that died or were sacrificed and now continue to serve the lich in undeath.

Rise from Sacrifice. Those sacrificed by the lich or its bleak necromancers find no peace in death and come back to serve its master for eternity.

Not only Humanoids. Even goblinoid servants or other monsters can become shadowguards.

Shadow Spirits. Shadowguards are incorporeal undead with bodies made up of material taken from Shadowfell. Each shadowguard resembles that shape of its original mortal body.

Master Guardians. Shadowguards serve their master by guarding its lair against infiltrators and are often found leading shadows. They are very skillful and attentive guardians and they can easily surprise intruders.

SHADOWGUARD

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (0)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +7 (+9 in dim light or darkness)

Saving Throws Dex +7

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common plus any two

Challenge CR 8 (3,900 XP)

Amorphous. The shadowguard can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Isolation's Chill. When a shadowguard damages a target with its Blades of Shadow, then the target takes an additional 5 (1d8) cold damage if the target does not have an ally within 5 feet of it.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shadowguard can take the hide action as a bonus action.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadowguard has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Multiattack. The shadowguard makes two Blades of Shadow attacks.

Blades of Shadow. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. Any creature that is damaged by Blades of Shadow must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain the restrained condition until the end of its next turn. The target dies if its Strength is reduced to 0. Otherwise the reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. If a creature dies from this attack, a new shadow allied to the shadowguard rises from the corpse 1 hour later.

APPENDIX C: TRAPS

The following traps are examples of some of the defenses that can be found in a lich's lair. They were designed following the guidelines presented in *Xanthar's Guide to Everything*.

EXPLOSIVE OBJECT

Simple trap (level 11-16, dangerous threat)

Explosive objects are often disguised as precious items that look appealing to intruders. Fake magic items, art objects, and books make good explosive object traps.

Trigger. A magical rune, hidden under the object, will cause it to explode if the object is touched by a living creature.

Effect. A fiery explosion destroys the object and damages everything in a 20-foot-radius sphere, centered on the object. Each target within the area of effect must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half damage on a successful save.

Countermeasures. *Detect magic* reveals an aura of illusion on the item. It's a minor magic to conceal the real school of magic of the rune, which is evocation. A successful Intelligence (Investigation) DC 15 check reveals the rune to any creature that inspects the object. A successful Intelligence (Arcana) DC 15 check reveals the passphrase to deactivate the rune. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 15) destroys the rune.



There's a great deal said against Death.
The people who have to die, draw her
picture like a crone with a sack, and all
that. But Death's a good friend to birds.
Wherever there's dead men and quiet,
you'll find a good many birds, that's
been my experience

- Gene Wolfe

EXTRAPLANAR GATE

Complex trap (level 17-20, dangerous threat)

The extraplanar gate trap is attached to an archway, normally a 10-foot tall archway with two stone columns. This trap is designed for an archway that connects two separate rooms in the lair. The archway is normally five feet wide. Some runes are also carved on the stone arch.

Trigger. This trap activates as soon as a non-undead creature crosses the archway and it remains active while any non-undead creatures are within the two rooms connected to the archway.

Initiative. The trap acts on initiative count 20 and initiative count 10.

Active Elements. This trap uses power from both the Shadowfell and Negative Energy planes to gate in more and more shadow monsters as it remains active. Crossing the archway also traps living creatures in a demiplane of nightmares for a round, and any living creature ending its turn near the archway will also take necrotic and cold damage.

Shadows are Coming (Initiative Count 20). A shadow from the Shadowfell exits from the archway. Each shadow that arrives acts immediately to kill all living creatures it can find on initiative count 20.

Exit the Void (Initiative Count 10). Any creature that has been imprisoned in the Nightmare Prison during their previous turn reappears within 5 feet of the archway.

Dynamic Element. More shadows come from the gate the longer it remains open.

More Shadows. The DM keeps a count of how many times initiative count 20 occurs. The number of shadows that arrive will increase by one for each odd number of initiative count 20s. As an example, this trap has been active for 5 rounds and it is initiative count 20. Therefore 3 shadows will spawn, and 4 shadows will spawn on the 7th initiative count 20 and so forth.

Constant Elements. Extraplanar trap affects any non-undead creature that crosses the archway or ends its turn within 5 feet of it.

Nightmare Prison. Any non-undead creature that crosses the archway is immediately teleported and imprisoned in a demiplane of shadow and nightmares. The creature takes 55 (10d10) psychic damage or half as much if it succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw.

Negative Energy Aura. Any non-undead creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the archway takes 22 (4d10) cold damage and 22 (4d10) necrotic damage or half as much if it succeeds on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw.

Countermeasures. The extraplanar gate trap can be disabled by particular countermeasures.

Runes. An Intelligence (Arcana) DC 15 check reveals that the runes maintain the power of this trap. The runes can be destroyed with three successful Intelligence (Arcana) DC 15 checks. Each check requires an action and a creature must be within 5 feet of the arch to perform this action. Only one creature can work on this task at once. The runes can also be disabled with a successful casting of dispel magic against DC 19.

Columns. Characters can try to destroy the columns. Each column has AC 18 and 44 hit points and is immune to poison and necrotic damage. When both columns are destroyed then the trap is destroyed.



FORCE PRISON

Simple trap (level 11-16, dangerous threat)

This trap is disguised as a secret door, discovered by a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. When it activates, it detains the intruders until the arrival of the lich's servants.

Trigger. Opening the secret door triggers this trap.

Effect. When activated, this trap casts a 9th spell-level *forcecage* spell. The 20-foot-by-20-foot cage appears near the door, on the side where the door is opened.

Countermeasures. *Detect magic* reveals evocation magic on the door. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check disables the trap and a check of 15 or lower triggers it. A successful DC 19 *dispel magic* disables the trap. The cage lasts 1 hour. If an imprisoned creature wants to use teleportation or interplanar travel to escape the forcecage, then it must first succeed on a DC 19 Charisma saving throw.

MIST OF FEAR

Simple trap (level 11-16, dangerous threat)

A purple mist, just a few inches above the floor of a room will quickly rise to fill the entire space if the trap is triggered.

Trigger. Any non-undead creature that moves into the center of the room activates the trap.

Effect. When activated, each creature inside the room must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save the creature is frightened for 1 minute as per the *fear* spell and takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage, or half as much damage and no fear effect on a successful save. A frightened creature must flee the lich's lair.

Countermeasures. *Detect magic* reveals enchantment magic in the room. A successful DC 15 *dispel magic* disables the trap.

RAIN OF ACID

Simple trap (level 11-16, deadly threat)

This trap is placed in a 20 feet long section of a hallway that is 5 feet wide. When the trap is activated, the ceiling of the corridor opens up, releasing a flood of acid beneath it.

Trigger. Stepping on a pressure plate in the middle of the corridor triggers this trap.

Effect. Each creature in the trap's area of effect must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (18d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Countermeasures. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the plate. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the walls and floor are pitted by acid. A successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tool disables the trap and a result of 15 or lower triggers the trap. The trap can also be avoided by not stepping on the pressure plate.

SPECTRAL ARMS

Complex trap (level 11-16, dangerous threat)

This trapped hallway is 20 feet long and 5 feet wide. The walls of the trapped section have small holes in them.

Trigger. This trap activates as soon as a non-undead creature reaches the middle of the trapped section of hallway and it remains active while any non-undead creatures are in the trapped section.

Initiative. The trap acts on initiative count 20.

Active Elements. The hallway fills with spectral arms and tendrils that damage and attempt to restrain non-undead creatures.

Restraining Tendrils (Initiative Count 20). Shadowy arms and tendrils exit from the holes and try to grab non-undead creatures within 5 feet of them.

The arms make two +8 melee spell attacks. On a hit, the target suffers 17 (5d6) cold damage and 17 (5d6) necrotic damage and must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target gains the restrained condition. A creature restrained can use its action at the end of each of its following turns to free itself from the arms if it succeeds on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) ability check.

Constant Elements. This trap affects any non-undead creature that is in the hallway or within 5 feet of the hallway's Spectral Arms.

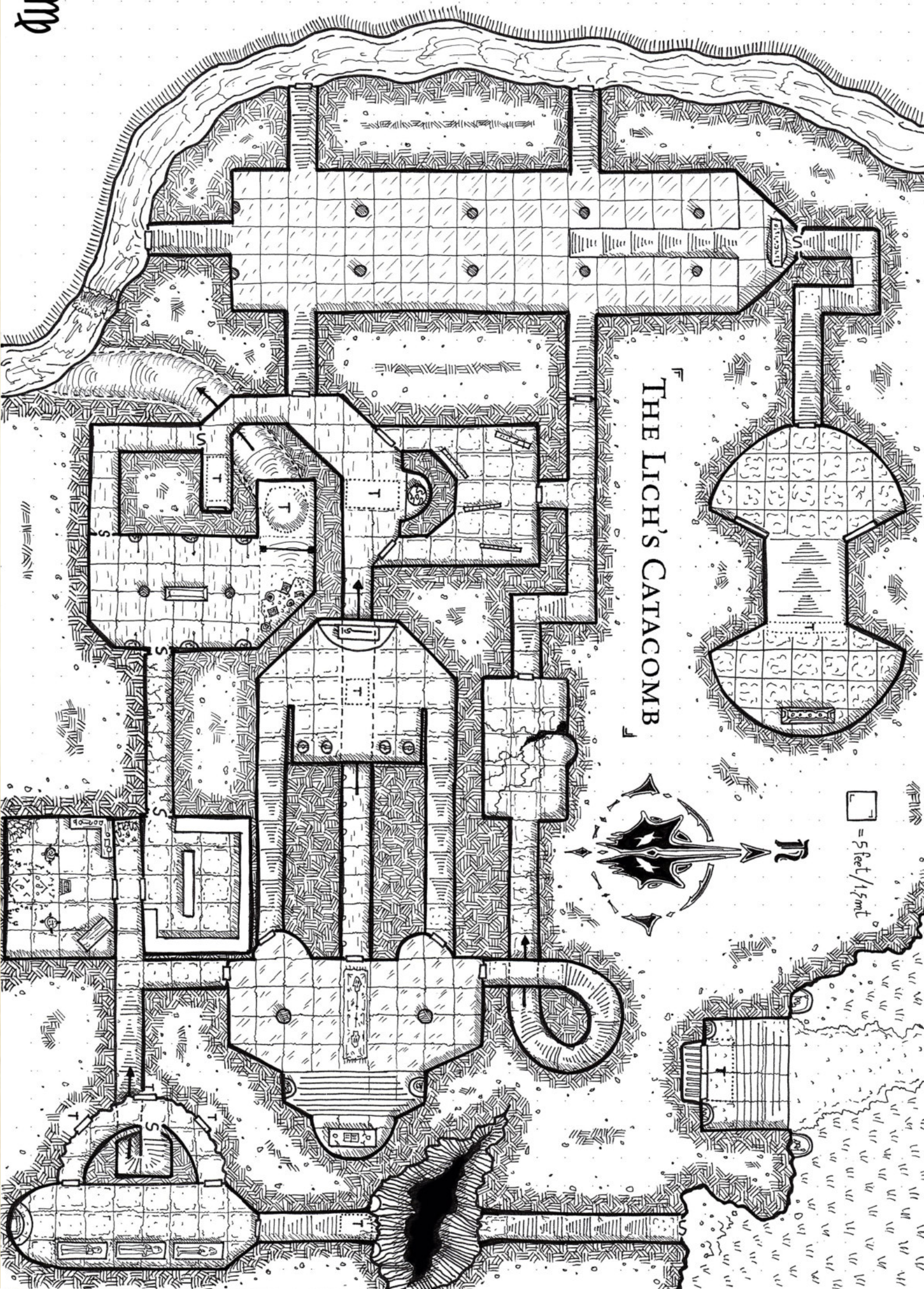
Crossing Corridor. Any non-undead creature that moves across the corridor suffers an opportunity attack by Restraining Tendrils for each 5 feet of movement inside the corridor. On a successful hit, the creature takes 17 (5d6) cold damage and 17 (5d6) necrotic damage and must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target gains the restrained condition. A creature restrained can use its action at the end of each of its following turns to free from the arms, making a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) ability check.

Restrained creature. At the beginning of its turn, a restrained creature suffers painful nightmares and mental anguish. The target takes 55 (10d10) psychic damage or half as much if it succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw.

Countermeasures. The trap can be disabled by particular countermeasures.

Arms. The spectral arms can be destroyed. Each group of arms in a five-foot section of hall have AC 15 and 35 hit points. If the arms are reduced to 0 hit points they will disintegrate. The arms are immune to cold, necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. The arms are also immune to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. Each 5-foot section of arms can be dispelled with a successful DC 15 *dispel magic*.





THE LICH'S CATACOMB

□ = 5 feet / 1.5 mt

