

INTRODUCTION

This document adds an additional elder evil to 5th edition: Shothragot, the Herald of Tharizdun.

BADOOGA'S NOTES

Elder Evils was a 3rd edition supplement. It was the last supplement released before the release of 4th edition, so its designers decided to go out with a bang by making nine campaign-ending threats for DMs to use: Atropus, Father Llymic, the Hulks of Zoretha, the Leviathan, Pandorym, Ragnorra, Sertrous, Kyuss, and Zargon. My *Elder Evils* conversion, found on [GM Binder](#) and on [Google Drive](#), converts all nine of these elder evils to 5th edition.

A tenth elder evil, Shothragot, was teased in *Dragon* 361, and was fully released in *Dragon* 362. A full dungeon for the final encounter with Shothragot was presented in *Dungeon* 152. I decided that I can't just allow Shothragot to be ignored, and that it's about time I bring Tharizdun to 5e.

ORIGINAL NOTES

The notion of the elder evil was first presented in the 3rd edition book *Lords of Madness* to reflect the incredibly powerful creatures worshiped by the aboleths as gods. But these are no gods; they are abominations — terrible forces of destruction and change whose mere appearance signals a signature change in the world. Whether by triggering an apocalyptic end, causing some cataclysm to reshape the continents, or even just altering the fundamental nature of magic, these beings wield great power. Such figures have long been with D&D, even if not named such, and can be found among the abominations in the 3rd edition *Epic Level Handbook* or further back with the tarrasque, powerful demon princes, inexplicable powers that defy description, and, rarely, among some gods, specifically Tharizdun.

This special article that ties in to *Elder Evils* showcases one of the most iconic forces of evil in the D&D game, revealing the danger posed by Tharizdun on a larger cosmological scale by presenting his chief minion, the elder evil named Shothragot. As with the entries in the *Elder Evils* sourcebook, you should consider the information here to be a collection of ideas to help you end your campaign.

READING THE ENTRIES

Each of the chapters in the original *Elder Evils* book describes an elder evil, its motivations and servants, and signs of its approach, as well as providing a sample story arc to help you introduce the threat into your campaign. A given entry uses the format below. Additionally, be sure to reference the original book for information on how to use Shothragot's Sign of Apocalypse.

BACKGROUND

This section opens with a paragraph of common knowledge and continues with several paragraphs of specialized knowledge. Learning one of these pieces of information about an elder evil requires an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) check, as listed in the original book. While the DC of each check remains up to the DM, they should range from Moderate (DC 15) to Nearly Impossible (DC 30). Alternatively, the DM may decide that this information cannot be acquired except through certain methods of research or interaction with the campaign world.

ART CREDITS

All art and images are taken from *The Essence of Evil* in *Dungeon* 152. The art for Shothragot and the Black Cyst are also taken from *Dragon* 362. Any other art is taken from official 3.5e and 4e sources.

GOAL

This section follows the same format as the Background entry, but the lore entries reveal ever more secret details of the elder evil's ultimate purpose.

THE ELDER EVIL IN THE CAMPAIGN

This section sets out a sample story arc with increasingly difficult challenges, culminating in the final confrontation with the elder evil. The Suggested Level of these challenges correspond with strengthening signs of the apocalypse, as detailed later in this chapter. Each chapter includes a section that describes the game effects of that elder evil's sign.

Two subsections suggest ways to adapt the elder evil to the *Forgotten Realms*® and *Eberron*™ campaign settings.

Variant Usage. This subsection presents an original variant on how an elder evil might fit in a unique campaign setting, or it may present alternate plot hooks or story details to be used as appropriate.

You can adapt any of the example elder evils in this book so that they fit better into your setting's history. For example, planar campaigns or campaigns that use Spelljammers might wish to change the default locations given in the original book to better fit the setting they are a part of.

DESCRIPTION

Here follow physical details of the elder evil. Important servants and minions are also presented in this section. Statistics for these creatures are listed alongside their lore and description entries.

PAGE NUMBERS

Most of the content in this document is self-contained. However, some entries in this document might have the following notation: **waterveiled assassin** (EdE 21). The page number here refers to the bestiary document for the other nine elder evils, which can be accessed through the main document linked above. If you want to head directly to the bestiary, you can view it on [GM Binder](#) or on [Google Drive](#).

EXTRA IMAGES

Check out these Imgur albums for important images you can use in your games!

- [Maps](#): High quality maps for each area and encounter.
- [Monster Images](#): Art for most monsters in the bestiary.
- [Tokens](#): Tokens for most monsters in the bestiary.

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To respect the copyright of Wizards of the Coast, my original *Elder Evils* does not reprint the entirety of the original book. However, unlike the original *Elder Evils* book, the content that is being converted to 5e in this document is all free - the original PDFs were posted for free on the WotC website. Now, content from the [Dragon](#) and [Dungeon](#) magazines can be legally downloaded on [archive.org](#).

The actual documents don't have any Open Game Content in them, as defined by the 3rd edition Open Game License. However, I cite the more recent [Fan Content Policy](#) from Wizards of the Coast, which allows me to use Wizards IP to make fan content as long as it is 100% free (which it is). Between this, the free nature of the original content, and the transformative nature of this work, I believe I am within my rights to publish this in its entirety.

SHOTHRAGOT

"The Ender, the Elder Elemental Eye, the Dark God, the Patient One, He Who Waits, the Anathema, the Father of Elder Evils, the Author of Wickedness, He of Eternal Darkness, the Eater of Worlds, the Despised, the Undoer — these are but a few of the many names for our glorious master. One thousand years, the Dark God has waited, lurking beyond the bounds of reality, contained in a vault constructed by jealous hands, his rightful throne held by usurpers. In these last centuries, our efforts have found destruction, decay, and loss, as these lesser powers have sought to confuse us, mislead us, and turn us against one another, for you see, Tharizdun's release spells their end. They fear him. Yes, mighty Boccob, Heironeous, even that sad crone Beory all quail before his imminent arrival. The time is at hand, the end has come, and it is our sacred duty to usher in the last age of our world and bring the constructs of the false gods to rightful ruin. Only then will we understand the perfect nature of all that is possible with the Eternal Darkness."

Shothragot is an avatar of Tharizdun, the Chained God. While it is only an extension of the Dark God's will, Shothragot is a powerful elder evil even on its own. On its own, Shothragot's awakening endangers all mortal life on a given world. But this pales in comparison to the true threat: the release of its master Tharizdun, who seeks to bring about the end of the universe, and has the means to achieve it.

BACKGROUND

It is telling that the origins of the Dark God are buried beneath layers of secrecy. All faiths oppose the cults who serve He of Eternal Darkness, and to whisper his name is tantamount to blasphemy. The fear Tharizdun evokes and the intensity of his opposition are all well-founded since even the gods themselves, good and evil alike, share this trepidation. The reason is simple: The Ebon God wants nothing more than to unravel the nature of reality, to undo all the works of gods and mortals, to shatter the planes, and dissolve all things to their fundamental natures. Tharizdun is an uncaring force of destruction, motivated by an inexplicable need to eradicate all things, himself included.

Since Tharizdun works always to bring ruin, the gods set aside their differences and sealed the dreadful power away, holding him in stasis so his malign will and countless servants could no longer threaten the balance of the cosmos. And though the gods returned to squabbling soon after his imprisonment eons ago, they remain united in their distaste and fear of their ancient enemy and, to this day, they are all committed to ensuring he remains safely tucked away beyond the reach of misguided fools. That the Dark God remains sealed away in a prison plane in some forgotten corner of the multiverse, though, is no consolation. The divine seals may contain him, but Tharizdun can extend his malign will beyond them, caressing the minds of his servants and impelling them to do his bidding. Assuming the guise of the Elder Elemental Eye, he has accumulated numerous disturbing cults that swear their allegiance to the multifaceted nature of their insane master, fighting each other as much as they move toward their unholy mission of releasing a power whose fullness and wickedness they only dimly realize.

Champions of the various gods and agencies remain vigilant against the legions of the Elder Elemental Eye, by sacking their temples, raiding their redoubts, and executing cultists wherever they find them, but few realize the true breadth of Tharizdun's power. A small body of scholars and sages believes that Tharizdun's greatest servants are the elder evils themselves. So while the courageous heroes fight Tharizdun's minions, the Dark God compels the elder evils to stir and awaken so that they may ravage the world and weaken its gods. Tharizdun hopes that when he finally weakens the wards holding him, he will emerge unopposed.

While various elder evils may or may not respond to the summons of the Dark God, Tharizdun's chief creation, an abomination named Shothragot, awoke in the cyclopean depths of the earth, far below the mines of a temple devoted to the Elder Elemental Eye. Weak and nearly powerless after years of undisturbed slumber, it siphons power from the prayers of the unwitting servants above, biding its time until it gains the strength it needs to set in motion the final events that would see its master free.

While having an awakened elder evil is terrifying to conceive by itself, Shothragot is a special case, for this dreadful horror's origins trace back to the Invoked Devastation and the Rain of Colorless Fire, when Tharizdun's servants summoned forth his avatar for the last time. Whether or not its appearance compelled the use of appalling magic that brought death and devastation to hundreds of thousands is a matter of debate, but what is known is that almost as fast as the avatar appeared, so too did he vanish after the wrought destruction. Most scholars suspect the avatar was destroyed in the conflagration, but in truth, it was weakened, dreadfully so, and the powerful energies unleashed left the avatar crippled. Thus it fled into the bowels of the earth, where it waited.

Shothragot might have laid in wait forever, but its slumber was disturbed when a most unfortunate happenstance occurred. A band of adventurers, whose purpose was to destroy a cult of the Elder Elemental Eye infesting the mines around a fortress of wickedness, found their own deaths, nearly to the man. When a fleeing survivor became lost and stumbled into the elder evil crèche, Shothragot awoke, seized the mortal, and refashioned him using the last spark of divine essence to make him his principle servant. With his new agent in the field and with the prayers dedicated to the Elder Elemental Eye infusing him with power, the elder evil now swells with power and is nearly ready to reveal itself and bring about the release of its beloved master.

GOALS

Shothragot's nature as both avatar and elder evil fills its mind with a deep and abiding desire to reunite with Tharizdun and restore the exiled god to the fullness of his being. The elder evil is not quite aware of its own divine origins thanks to many centuries spent trapped deep within the earth, but at some instinctual level, it recognizes this need and thus it devotes all of its being toward completing this objective. What it does know is that it has many enemies arrayed against it, and so it is careful not to reveal itself until such time that it is strong enough to smash those who stand against it.

Its need for joining Tharizdun fills its thoughts, but it has no clear understanding of how it should go about achieving this end. The only thing it receives are fleeting images, disparate memories of sensations and emotions, and a deep and abiding hatred. From time to time, a face swims into its consciousness, and when it appears, it compels its minions to seek out and destroy these individuals, although even it knows not why. In truth, it is Tharizdun himself who dispatches these messages to remove obstacles that would prevent Shothragot from completing its mission.

Of late, Shothragot has become aware of a number of black jewels, 333 to be exact, known as the Gems of Tharizdun. It's not certain, but it suspects these items are integral to dissolving the wards holding his master in stasis. Thus, while its agents go out and murder his enemies, they are ever watchful for the 333 Gems of Tharizdun, which they bring back to the growing elder evil. Shothragot consumes and destroys each one they return to him, bloating on the released energy while simultaneously sending currents of destructive energies through Tharizdun's oubliette.

SHOTHRAGOT IN THE CAMPAIGN

Introducing Shothragot to your campaign signals a looming and devastating event that could have sweeping repercussions and may very well alter the fundamental nature of your campaign setting. Shothragot, as presented here, is close to unlocking the prison, having absorbed nearly all of the Gems of Tharizdun.

CULT OF THARIZDUN THE CHAINED GOD

Typical Cultists: Cult fanatic, cultist, any demon, any evil elemental, any Far Realm aberration, any kuo-toa
Signature Spells: *Eldritch blast* (cantrip), *command* (1st level), *darkness* (2nd level), *enemies abound* (3rd level)

Cults dedicated to Tharizdun take on many forms, including Cults of Elemental Evil and those of a more demonic nature. Many cultists of the Ebon God also take the form of individuals or small groups that serve his will directly. Despite this disorganization, each and every cultist of Tharizdun receives orders from Shothragot or some other extension of Tharizdun's will.

Cultists that are corrupted by Tharizdun's influence sometimes gain the Tharizdun's Spark or Blessing of Tharizdun abilities below.

Tharizdun's Spark (Recharge 6). As a bonus action, the cultist touches a simple or martial weapon or a natural weapon, if it has one. The next creature hit by the touched weapon must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or experience short-term madness for 10 minutes. Consult the Short-Term Madness table (see "Madness Effects" in chapter 8 of the Dungeon Master's Guide) to determine the form of the madness. The affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each minute, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Blessing of Tharizdun. When the cultist takes damage, it can use its reaction to force each hostile creature within 10 feet of it to make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes half the damage the cultist took as psychic damage.

SIGN: SEAL OF BINDING

This sign manifests as a glyph that spreads across the sky and increasingly interferes with planar communication and transportation.

Faint: When a creature casts a conjuration spell or uses an ability that summons a creature or multiple creatures, it must make an ability check using its spellcasting ability (DC 12). On a failure, the creature suffers one level of exhaustion. In addition, spells that forcibly return creatures to their native plane, such as *banishment*, automatically fail.

Moderate: As faint, but in addition, summoned creatures no longer return to their native planes. When a summoning spell or effect's duration expires, the summoned creature is no longer under the summoner's control. Additionally, any spell or effect that involves teleportation has a 20% chance of a mishap. On a mishap, the teleportation fails, and each teleporting creature or object takes 16 (3d10) force damage.

Strong: As moderate, but the chance of a mishap when teleporting increases to 40%. In addition, spells and other effects that contact extraplanar beings (such as the *contact other plane* spell and the Divine Intervention cleric feature) cease to function.

Overwhelming: All summoning and teleportation spells and effects cease to function.

TIMELINE

What follows is a possible campaign timeline with Suggested Party Levels (SPL) to help you construct adventures around the key events that might occur as Shothragot awakens.

SPL 3: While exploring a dungeon, the player characters come upon a vault bearing the bas-relief carvings of numerous holy and unholy symbols, representing nearly every known god and quite a few unknown ones as well. Beyond the door, the player characters find a freezing cold room with walls, floor, and ceiling blackened and cracked. Hovering in the center of the room is a black gem the size of a fist. The stone is surrounded by a wall of force, preventing the party from acquiring it through normal means. If the characters free the stone, they find themselves constantly harassed by agents of Tharizdun until they rid themselves of the cursed object.

SPL 6: A few months later, a powerful earthquake ripples through the lands, causing terrible destruction for hundreds of miles around. While traveling through the ruins, the player characters come upon a community buried in a landslide. While little remains other than rubble and debris, one structure stands intact: a slender tower at the center of the community. It appears as if the tumbling boulders veered around the tower. Investigating the place reveals a number of traps, magical guardians, and more, but worse, the party isn't the only ones exploring the site. Also present are several insane cultists who plunder the place in search of something.

At the top of the tower, the cultists find what they're looking for: a black gem, identical to the one the party found earlier in the dungeon. A thrilling fight takes place, but before the party can slay all the villains, one slips away with the gem in hand.

SPL 9 (Faint Sign): After weeks of quiet, when life just starts to return to normal, a queer fiery glyph appears in the sky. Attempts to reach it through magic utterly fail; it always seems to move just out of reach. No one seems to know what it signifies, but certain types of spells are becoming harder to cast.

Tharizdun, peering into the future, senses the characters are a dire threat, and so it dispatches a dream to Shothragot, who in turn sends its greatest minion, George Forsworn, to attend to them. The mortal hunter plays a cat-and-mouse game, murdering those closest to the characters first and then picking off the heroes one at a time.

SPL 12 (Moderate Sign): As the sign in the sky intensifies, the greatest minds in the lands set to unravel the mystery of its appearance. A wide range of theories abound, but Jallarzi Sallavarian, a powerful archmage and member of the Circle of Eight (or some other arcane group), is close and she believes the glyph signifies a dire threat to the world, suspecting it may have something to do with Tharizdun. Well-acquainted with the history of the Dark God, she sets out for the Sea of Dust to find the Forgotten City in the hopes of unraveling the mystery of the glyph.

When she doesn't return, the remaining members of the Circle of Eight, who work to undo the expanding sign, hire the adventurers to track the missing wizard. Enduring a long and perilous journey and exploring the haunted ruins of the ancient city, the adventurers learn the history of the avatar, but not before being confronted by the warped Jallarzi, who, through dabbling with dangerous magic, has become a twisted creature of the Dark God.

SPL 15 (Strong Sign): Armed with the information uncovered in the Forgotten City and burdened with the horrible fate of an esteemed member of the Circle, the adventurers return to the Circle of Eight, only to find that the sign has grown even stronger. Cross-referencing their information with that of the powerful wizards, Mordenkainen suggests the heroes explore former strongholds of Tharizdun's cultists to see if they can learn of some way to stop the impending apocalypse. The party journeys to the Temple of Elemental Evil, the Crater Ridge Mines, and other locations, each site revealing a bit more about the enemy they face.

SPL 18 (Overwhelming Sign): Just as the heroes are exploring the final known site, the caldera formed by the Crater Ridge explodes, and amidst the debris and destruction rises a massive globe of dripping black corruption. As it rises, the sign in the heavens expands until it stretches from one horizon to the next. Horrific insane creatures come and go from the bulk, emerging from orifices that pierce its glistening hide.

The sign's power prevents the Circle of Eight from arriving here quickly, so it falls to the party to journey inside this floating abomination and destroy the essence that lurks within. Should they fail, Shothragot will surely unlock the wards that seal Tharizdun and draw forth the gods in a climactic battle that will leave the world forever after changed.

SHOTHRAGOT IN EBERRON

Tharizdun is a powerful daelkyr warlord, a being so profoundly evil and so immense in terms of magical power, he is very nearly a god. Despised by his fellow Daelkyr, they sealed him away in a vast prison within the Realm of Madness and set countless traps, guards, and vicious wards to ensure he never broke loose. Unfortunately, Tharizdun's minions, of which there are many beneath Eberron, seek to release their dark lord and busily create a weapon that will not only breach the Gatekeeper wards that keep them underground but also bridge the gulf between planes and release their dreadful master. This weapon is Shothragot.

SHOTHRAGOT IN FAERÛN

Instead of being an avatar of Tharizdun, Shothragot is the creation of Ghaunadaur, an entity spawned to shatter the worshipers of all other gods and enable the Elder Eye to become master of all things. Shothragot is the principal instrument in his plans and the elder evil slaughters the worshipers of other gods to weaken them. Once the gods are brought low, Ghaunadaur plans to move against them, stealing their power for himself until he can challenge the architect of the universe — Ao himself.

Alternatively, perhaps Shothragot fled from Greyhawk to the Forgotten Realms via planar travel, only to be imprisoned in Undermountain by Halaster Blackcloak. Despite the Mad Mage's power, Shothragot cannot be held back forever, and soon Tharizdun will have his chance to destroy Faerûn alongside the rest of the multiverse.

VARIANT USAGE

As Shothragot is but an avatar of Tharizdun himself, you can use this chapter to represent the release of Tharizdun through other means, even if Shothragot is not involved.

As Tharizdun is the face behind the Elder Elemental Eye, you can use Shothragot alongside the *Princes of the Apocalypse* adventure for 5e. You can connect the various Cults of Elemental Evil to Shothragot and Tharizdun more directly; for example, you can have the elemental apocalypse sought out by the . At minimum, it may be useful to reference this module so that you can use the various cults and temples of Elemental Evil throughout the campaign (as discussed in the timeline above).

As Shothragot and Tharizdun threaten the multiverse itself, they present the same threat to campaigns that take place wildspace or the planes. In a Spelljammer campaign, perhaps Shothragot's size can be scaled upwards, such that its release is enough to shatter an entire planet into pieces. In a planar campaign, perhaps the party must journey to the Elemental Planes and even the Abyss itself in order to root out Tharizdun's various cults.

Beyond that, consider the following additions and changes:

- Shothragot's sign of apocalypse is the Seal of Binding because the Seal of Binding is what prevents Tharizdun from escaping in the first place. That said, you are free to change it to the Blood Moon sign, which can be associated with the madness and aggressive behavior that Tharizdun seeks to inspire in others.
- As discussed in the *Demonomicon* from 4th edition, Tharizdun is said to have created the Abyss using the Shard of Evil given to him by the Obyriths. While most demons aren't tanar'ri and thus aren't associated with Tharizdun in any way, this connection gives you the opportunity to have some of Tharizdun's agents be demons or demon cultists.
- Evil and good gods alike seek to prevent the release of Tharizdun from his prison. Thus, clerics of all faiths may be given commands from their deities to snuff out the forces of Tharizdun, making them likely allies of the party. That said, feel free to use the conflict between good and evil, and between law and chaos, as a point of religious contention during your campaign.

DESCRIPTION

This section gives descriptions and statistics for the essence of Shothragot, black cysts, Gorge Forsworn and his companion Mask, and the corrupted archmage Jallarzi Sallavarian.

ESSENCE OF SHOTHRAGOT

Shothragot is not something that can be fought directly, for in its fully awakened form, it is a massive ball of glistening black tar pierced with scores of holes that burrow into its body. Instead, to combat this horror, one must destroy its consciousness, which hides within it bloated, tumescent form.

The essence of Shothragot is a 66-foot tall mountain of slippery black tar, reflecting in miniature the large form containing it. Bubbling up to the surface of its slick epidermis are twisted faces, crying out in agony or cackling with mad glee.

The essence of Shothragot holds centuries of memories, the untold suffering it endured as it fled the dreadful magic of the Baklunish and Suloise, and the agony and madness it embraced as its body reformed into its horribly bloated state. As intelligent and cunning as it is, hate consumes it, and any who dare confront it find only its unquenchable wrath.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region within 5 miles of Shothragot is warped by its unholy presence, creating one or more of the following effects:

- Giant blobs of black corruption that are cast off from Shothragot's body dot the landscape. This corruption is only difficult terrain, and it doesn't do any immediate damage. However, any creature that suffers prolonged exposure to this corruption transforms into a horrific demon, an elemental gone berserk, or a crazed aberration.
- If a humanoid spends at least 1 hour within 5 miles of Shothragot, that creature must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or descend into a madness determined by the Madness of Tharizdun table. A creature that succeeds on this saving throw can't be affected by this regional effect again for 24 hours.

If Shothragot dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.

MADNESS OF THARIZDUN

If a creature goes mad in a region tainted by Tharizdun or within line of sight of Shothragot, roll on the Madness of Tharizdun table to determine the nature of the madness, which is a character flaw that lasts until cured. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more on madness.

MADNESS OF THARIZDUN

d100 Flaw (lasts until cured)

- 01- "The universe is doomed. Anything I do to save it is only delaying the inevitable."
- 21- "The only thing worthy of respect is a display of power and domination over others."
- 41- "If I don't hide my true intentions, someone will root me out and kill me."
- 61- "If an opportunity arises for me to seize power, I won't hesitate to take it."
- 81- "Existence is a farce. The universe and its creators are all terrible."

ESSENCE OF SHOTHRAGOT

Gargantuan aberration (titan), chaotic evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)
Hit Points 444 (24d20 + 192)
Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	14 (+2)	27 (+8)	20 (+5)	24 (+7)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Con +16, Int +13, Wis +15, Cha +16
Skills Arcana +13, Insight +15, Intimidation +16, Perception +15
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning
Damage Immunities acid, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, petrified, poisoned, unconscious
Senses truesight 120 ft., blindsight 500 ft., passive Perception 25
Languages understands all languages but can't speak, telepathy 1,000 ft.
Challenge 28 (120,000 XP)

Anathematic Secrecy. The essence can't be targeted by any divination magic or perceived through magical scrying sensors.

Aura of Mind Erosion. Any hostile creature that starts its turn within 60 feet of the essence must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a creature suffers disadvantage on all Wisdom and Charisma saving throws until the start of the essence's next turn.

Freedom of Movement. The essence ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can't reduce its speed or cause it to be restrained. It can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

Innate Spellcasting. The essence's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 24). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect magic*, *dispel evil and good*, *stinking cloud*
3/day each: *blight*, *cloudkill*, *dispel magic*
2/day each: *contagion*, *fire storm*, *reverse gravity*
1/day each: *divine word*, *earthquake*, *feeblemind*

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

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

Magic Weapons. The essence's weapon attacks are magical.

Unyielding Essence. The essence is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form, as well as those that would read its thoughts, determine if it is lying, or magically influence its thoughts or behavior.

Actions

Multiattack. The essence makes three attacks: two with its tentacles and one with its bite. It then uses Corporeal Instability.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (4d8 + 10) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 20). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the target takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +18 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (4d10 + 14) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (essence's choice).

Corporeal Instability. The essence targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or take 22 (4d6 + 8) necrotic damage and become corrupted for 1 minute.

A corrupted creature's flesh constantly melts, flows, writhes, and boils. The creature has disadvantage on attack rolls, its speed is reduced by half, and whenever it takes damage, its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The creature dies if its hit point maximum is reduced to 0.

The corrupted creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Discord and Woe (2/Day). One creature within 100 miles of the essence that the essence is aware of must make a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw. A creature automatically succeeds if it is immune to being charmed. On a failed save, the target must target its allies with attacks and other damaging effects 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. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the essence's Discord and Woe for the next 24 hours.

Legendary Actions

The essence 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. The essence regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Elemental Burst. The essence targets itself or one creature that is currently grappled by it, corrupted by it, affected by its Discord and Woe, or affected by one of its ongoing spells. Elemental energy bursts out from the target, dealing acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (essence's choice) to those caught in the blast. Each creature in a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on the target must make a DC 24 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) of the chosen type on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The essence is immune to this damage.

Fling. One Large or smaller object held or creature grappled by the essence is thrown up to 60 feet in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). The essence casts an innate spell.

BLACK CYST

"A great black ball of impenetrable darkness hangs in the air. From the blackness spills a knot of writhing tentacles."

A black cyst is a monstrous creation of Tharizdun, an idiotic servant that exists only to spread the ill-will of the Dark God and destroy all living things.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

A black cyst is aggressive in combat, flying into the thickest group of combatants and exposing them to its aura. Once positioned, it uses its Entropic Scream to damage as many creatures as it can. Over the course of the next few rounds, it uses its Multiattack to grapple as many creatures as it can, uncaring or unable to distinguish between the types of foes.

The black cyst reserves its magical abilities for when it has taken a significant amount of damage, usually once it is at half of its hit points or fewer. It responds by summoning an elemental followed on the next round with one of its spells, targeted against the creature that dealt it the most damage if possible.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTER

A black cyst is a particularly obscure outsider, virtually unknown outside of a few dusty journals penned by occultists and lunatics. Black cysts, when encountered, are always found in conjunction with powerful priests of Tharizdun or one of the mad god's other aspects, namely the Elder Elemental Eye. A cult lucky (or unlucky) enough to have the service of such a monstrosity may very well bind it into an object such as an altar or magic item, while others may mask its appearance with a liberal use of illusion spells. Some even contain them with walls of force to keep them in reserve should their temple fall under attack.

The Fane of the Dark God (SPL 14): This blasphemous temple is constructed of fitted blocks of obsidian that drink in light brought inside the unholy sanctum. Violet tapestries hang from rails running along the walls near the ceiling, while a great black altar riddled with lavender veins dominates the center of the room. Haunting the room is a black cyst that floats above an illusory ceiling that conceals its presence, watching and waiting for enemies.

ECOLOGY

The black cyst is an entirely unnatural creature — an abomination conjured up from the madness that defines Tharizdun's mind. Believed to ooze from the Dark God's demiplane prison, black cysts slip free and congregate around the shackled color pool marking the entrance to this place, awaiting the time when their hideous master is freed. Occasionally, black cysts escape to visit horrors on the Material, usually, but not always, on behalf of Tharizdun's mortal servants.

Having no need for sustenance doesn't stop these dim creatures from hunting. Black cysts seem to take special delight from dissolving the flesh of their victims, and when they kill a mortal, they set to work liquefying the victim with their unspeakable essences in a process that can take hours. As the tentacles caress the flesh, the fundamental nature seems to unravel, leaving behind a sticky mess of blood, liquid flesh, and softened bones. Queerly, this act does not actually affect living creatures or creatures animated by negative energy; it only works on the inanimate dead.

Environment: Black cysts are native to the nameless demiplane holding Tharizdun. The divine power that contains the Dark God seems not to affect the black cysts, who can come and go freely if they choose.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A black cyst looks like a massive black ball of darkness. Nothing mars its surface and when light falls upon it, it leaves no reflection. From its depths, it forms long ropy tentacles that flail about when angered. Outside of combat, the tentacles soften and retract, oozing back into the perfect orb of its body.

BLACK CYST

Large aberration (titan), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	17 (+3)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +10

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning

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

Condition Immunities charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Aura of Mind Erosion. Any hostile creature that starts its turn within 30 feet of the cyst must make a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a creature suffers disadvantage on all Wisdom and Charisma saving throws until the start of the cyst's next turn.

Freedom of Movement. The cyst ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can't reduce its speed or cause it to be restrained. It can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

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

At will: *detect magic*, *protection from evil and good*

2/day each: *confusion*, *telekinesis*

1/day each: *enemies abound*, *fear*

Psychic Mirror. If the cyst takes psychic damage, each creature within 10 feet of the cyst takes that damage instead; the cyst takes none of the damage. In addition, the cyst's location can't be discerned by magic.

Unyielding Essence. The cyst is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form, as well as those that would read its thoughts, determine if it is lying, or magically influence its thoughts or behavior.

Actions

Multiattack. The cyst makes three attacks with its tentacles. It can also use Entropic Scream if it is available.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the target takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns.

Entropic Scream (Recharge 5-6). The black cyst targets any number of creatures that it can see within 30 feet of it. Each target must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw, taking 27 (4d10 + 5) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, a target is also incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

Spawn Elemental (Recharge 6). The cyst magically summons an air, earth, fire, or water elemental, which emerges from the cyst's body and lands in the nearest unoccupied space. The elemental is chaotic evil and protects the cyst to the best of its ability. The cyst can only have one elemental summoned by this ability at a time.

SOCIETY

Black cysts are the nightmares of Tharizdun given form, and as such, they are capricious beings, capable of unprovoked and appalling acts of violence. They seem to delight in spreading suffering and insanity wherever they go, and some even torment other creatures that bend their knee to the Dark God. Their dim intellect prevents them from forming any sort of lasting community, and their lack of need for sustenance gives them little impetus to set aside their wanton wickedness to work together overlong. This said, black cysts are famous for combining their efforts against greater enemies. It's unlikely they do so out of their own tactical sense. Likely, it is because of some missive from their master.

Alignment: As creatures of Tharizdun's creation, black cysts are always chaotic evil. They recognize no pacts, no alliances, and are as quick to destroy their allies, as they are their enemies.

BLACK CYSTS IN EBERRON

Black cysts are semi-intelligent formations that cling like cancerous tumors on the edges of Xoriat. From time to time, a few become dislodged during the plane's normal passage only to find themselves caught between realities. Black cysts search for a way to bind themselves to a new reality and so watch for any planar anomalies such as those created by gate spells, and then they slip through to the surprise of the caster.

BLACK CYSTS IN FAERÛN

Black cysts came to Faerûn with the shades. Native to the Shadowfell, these creatures of incomprehensible wickedness and depthless evil seek only to spread madness and despair, to reduce all living things to decay, and slowly pull the Material Plane into the Shadowfell. Luckily, the shades brought few of these abominations with them and those that have slipped from their control have been destroyed by doughty heroes, but rumors persist of more and more of these hateful creatures appearing in places beyond Anauroch.

BLACK CYST LORE

DC Result

16 This creature is a black cyst, a vile horror born from Tharizdun's tortured flesh.

20 Black cysts are particularly resilient creatures. This result reveals its damage resistances and immunities.

A black cyst is the embodiment of madness and many of its attacks affect its foes' minds. Between its Aura of Mind Erosion and its various mind-affecting spells, to fight one of these things, an adventurer would do well to shield their mind somehow.

Black cysts share their master's elemental eye aspect such that they can call forth a random elemental to do their bidding, which is usually to ravage its attackers.

GEORGE FORSWORN

Medium humanoid (tiefling), chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (*plate, shield*)
Hit Points 144 (17d8 + 68)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +5, Con +8, Int +5, Wis +8, Cha +8
Skills Investigation +5, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +9, Survival +8
Damage Resistances fire, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
Languages Common, Deep Speech, Infernal
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when George hits with it (included in the attack).

Dark Blessing. George adds his Charisma modifier to his saving throws (accounted for in his statistics).

Improved Critical. George scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Inquisition Defier. George is immune to effects that allows other creatures to read his thoughts, determine whether he is lying, or know his alignment. Additionally, George can't be targeted by any divination magic or perceived through magical scrying sensors.

Mortal Hunter. George has advantage on attack rolls against any creature he has surprised. Additionally, George is invisible to darkvision, and he doesn't suffer disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks due to his heavy armor.

Slaughter (1/Turn). If George makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits a creature with it, the target takes an additional 7 (2d6) psychic damage. If the target is frightened, incapacitated, or surprised, the attack also becomes a critical hit, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or experience short-term madness for 10 minutes. Consult the Short-Term Madness table (see "Madness Effects" in chapter 8 of the Dungeon Master's Guide) to determine the form of the madness. The affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each minute, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. George is a 13th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). George has the following spells prepared:
1st level (4 slots): *absorb elements*, *detect magic*, *hunter's mark*
2nd level (3 slots): *silence*, *spike growth*, *zone of truth*
3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse*, *dispel magic*, *fear*
4th level (1 slot): *banishment*, *freedom of movement*

Actions

Multiattack. George makes three melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) damage, or 15 (2d10 + 4) damage if used with both hands, plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Vile Touch (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target suffers disadvantage on all saving throws until the end of George's next turn.

Reactions

Insane Defiance. In response to being targeted by an effect that would magically influence his mind, George can retarget the effect to another creature of his choice, other than the caster or source of the ability, within the effect's range.

GEORGE FORSWORN

Formerly a bold adventurer and member of the Green Horn Adventuring Troupe, George Forsworn fell from grace and is now a corrupted and insane villain, bent on spreading death and destruction in the blasphemous name of his despicable master. Forged anew by the filthy touch of the elder evil named Shothragot, violent images contaminate his mind and drive him to commit unspeakable acts of grisly murder. A disturbing villain, he prowls the lands in search of those he deems as marked for death and puts them to the sword.

The Green Horn Adventuring Troupe challenged the Crater Ridge Mines and were found wanting. After their priest fell, the kuo-toans swarmed them, ruthless in their tactics and filled with religious fervor and unreasoning hatred. One by one, the heroes fell, the flesh of their bodies flung up in the orgy of violence, trailing ropes of dark blood to the sounds of their screams. It was too much for the ranger named George, and he set aside his courage and fled into the black tunnels.

Cursing with every step, begging his feet to turn around so he might save his friends, his body denied him for the fear had a grip on his heart and there was no turning back. So he ran. He ran for what might have been minutes but felt like days and in his panic, he lost track of where he was, losing himself in the bleak corridors and the rusting rails of the accursed mines. When his breath came in hitches and the pain in his side forced him to stop, he collapsed, tears pouring from his eyes, little sobs escaping from his dry and cracked lips. He knew he would die. The sounds of his pursuers were close. Too close.

He drew his short sword, thumbing the edge of the blade as he fought for control over himself. He was about to stand — to make his final desperate attempt to kill his foes — when something wet and black and awful curled around his ankle. It jerked him into the cloying darkness of the mine's endless shadows before he even had a chance to scream.

BACKGROUND

When the Green Hand Adventuring Troupe learned that the cult of the Elder Elemental Eye was once more active in the area, they stormed the Crater Ridge Mines, searching for a way to breach the crater's interior and besiege the temple itself. In spite of early successes, they move too swiftly and eventually found themselves overrun and slaughtered by kuo-toan cultists. One among them survived, though: a ranger named George.

Fleeing through the tunnels, he eventually became lost and stumbled into a chamber containing a great abomination, a fragment of Tharizdun's personality severed at the time of his imprisonment. George's sudden arrival and the approach of more fishfolk hunters caused the great horror to awaken and snatch George, plunging the mortal into the thickened waters contaminated by its rot. Beneath the churning surface, the entity known as Shothragot infested George's mind, rent his spirit, and seized his body, transforming it into something else entirely.

The elder evil awakened a trace of fiendish blood that lay dormant in the broken ranger, causing him to become a tiefling. The severe agony of transformation shattered George's mind, and when he was spit out upon the shores, he gibbered like an idiot, shrieking and laughing by turns for days on end. But the thing in the pool was not through with its first disciple.

Shothragot swelled out from the pool's depths and instructed George to go forth to spread the news of its coming, and also to find and destroy its enemies. The new champion had no choice but to agree since Shothragot possessed his soul. And so he went out into the world, scouring the lands through which he traveled for those he perceived as threats and for those marked by his god as being chosen to die. When he finds them, he does as he has been commanded. He kills.

GOALS

The experience in the Crater Ridge Mines left George Forsworn changed in body and mind. The physical changes, while profound, compared little to the evil filling the vessel of his soul. The entity in the shadowy cave filled his mind with disturbing visions of apocalypse and planted instructions that grew and thrived in the haunted corridors of his thoughts. Now when he draws close to an individual Shothragot deems a threat — no matter how minor — George sees a fiery glyph burning on her brow. This sigil marks those George must kill even though each murder pained him, reducing him to tears for he knew in his heart that what he did was wrong. But George serves because nothing else is permitted to him — nothing beyond furthering his master's ambitions, and no doubt — no hesitation — will ever stop him from fulfilling his profane duty.

USING GEORGE FORSWORN

George Forsworn is insane. He is a villain in his own right, but he is also a servant of an elder evil. Shothragot has a penchant for remaking mortals into useful servants, bending their bodies and minds to become fitting tools for use in its own agenda of freeing Tharizdun. George, then, is an extension of the elder evil's will. He travels endlessly, moving through the lands, always watching and searching for those marked for death. He is a reluctant servant, haunted by the memories of his life before the touch of evil, and he despairs about his fate. Even the company of a beautiful nymph is not enough to drag him from his melancholic thoughts, though she uses every trick she can to distract him from his suffering.

Regardless of his detestation for his work, he cannot stop himself. He must do as his master commands and he has no concept of sparing his victims. Therefore, in spite of his reluctance, George is a foul adversary that strikes seemingly at random. In one village, he might slaughter an entire family of peasants, and in the next, he may burn down a temple of St. Cuthbert. Even he has no idea why his targets are selected. He only knows that they are.

FORSWORN IN FAERÛN

George Forsworn discovered Shothragot imprisoned deep within the Undermountain. Much of his murders are confined to the city of Waterdeep above the elder evil, but George has blood from all across the Sword Coast on his hands.

FORSWORN IN EBERRON

The Green Horn Adventuring Party was destroyed in the Khyber beneath Sharn, and George stumbled into an ancient temple that contained the essence of a powerful daelkyr. Releasing the abomination in a botched attempt to hide from his pursuers, George saw the entity tear free and then was remade by it into a brutal killing machine. As the entity builds its power in the dark tunnels, it sends George to Sharn to retrieve victims for sacrifice or for remaking — as the entity capriciously decides.

DESCRIPTION

George stands just under 6 feet tall. He has a muscular frame and chiseled features, and from afar, he might even pass for human. Anything more than a glance reveals the truth of his blood, for his skin is deep blue mottled with purple spots and strange whorls of scarred flesh. In the palm of each hand snarls a wet and dripping mouth, while a nest of writhing tentacles ending in pink tongues lashes out from his navel.

He conceals his monstrous appearance beneath a suit of purple full plate emblazoned with the same symbols decorating his body. His helmet is a terrifying thing, wrought to resemble the fusion of countless faces twisted with agony, the flesh of one spilling into another. So lifelike are the visages, they seem to move, crying out for mercy, even as George sets to complete his grisly task.

"I'm so sorry... sorry... it hurts, doesn't it. I'm trying to make this quick. S... s... so sorry!"

— George Forsworn

MASK

Medium fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +7, Cha +9
Skills Deception +9, Nature +7, Perception +7, Persuasion +9, Stealth +8
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Deep Speech, Druidic, Primordial, Sylvan
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Hide in the Shadows. While in dim light or darkness, Mask has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

Innate Spellcasting. Mask's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *find familiar*, *invisibility* (self only), *spare the dying*
3/day each: *cure wounds*, *entangle*, *lesser restoration*, *suggestion*
2/day each: *blight*, *cloudkill*, *locate creature*, *protection from energy*
1/day each: *greater restoration*, *pass without trace*, *scrying*

Inquisition Defier. Mask is immune to effects that allows other creatures to read her thoughts, determine whether she is lying, or know her alignment. Additionally, Mask can't be targeted by any divination magic or perceived through magical scrying sensors.

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

Nimble Escape. Mask can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of her turns.

Actions

Multiattack. Mask makes two claw attacks. She can then use Twisting Words, or Stunning Glance if it is available.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Twisting Words. Mask targets one creature she can see within 60 feet of her. If the target can hear and understand her, it must succeed on a DC 17 Charisma saving throw or become charmed for 1 minute. The charmed target can repeat the saving throw if Mask deals any damage to it. A creature that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to Mask's Twisting Words for 24 hours. If the target is already charmed by Mask, Mask can force it to make another DC 17 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, Mask can decide where it moves on its next turn.

Stunning Glance (Recharge 5–6). Mask targets one creature she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see Mask, it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned until the end of its next turn.

MASK

"She is my rock, my foundation, and I cling to her as I travel the bleak roads of my destiny." — George Forsworn

Mask is a corrupted alseid nymph, a fey warped by the filthy embrace of Shothragot and given to George Forsworn as a helper, lover, and slave. She aids George by locating his victims, but more importantly, she goads him to more and more acts of appalling violence. Her intoxicating beauty and her hold over his heart threaten to kill the last vestiges of his humanity.

BACKGROUND

Upon remaking George Forsworn, Shothragot spread its malign influence through the land, sliding down the rocky slopes of the Crater Ridge and infesting the forests, corrupting the waters, and warping the sylvan denizens in the surrounding environs. One of the first creatures bent to its will was a young nymph. When it found her, Shothragot filled her with unspeakable essence of its filth until she too became a creature of wickedness, joining the others who were in the thing's thrall.

The elder evil then gave the nymph to George Forsworn as a tool and gift to reward his mortal hunter for his constant service. Secretly, though, Shothragot suspected a part of his champion clung to his mortality and so it used Mask to ensure George would not abandon Shothragot's purpose.

GOALS

Outrage fills Mask. Her contamination leaves her a wretched thing and she expresses her wickedness with incomparable cruelty. Her principal objective is to ensure George remains true to Shothragot and continues his work to murder anyone who would rise against Shothragot as the evil struggles to reunite with his divine form. However, while attending to George, she takes every opportunity to kill and maim, adding to the horror George creates as he goes about his bloody business. Though she cannot conceive of turning her hatred against the Forsworn or some other minion of the elder evil, the rage still holds her heart. Thus, she unleashes her anger on innocents, delighting as her woody claws rend their flesh, savoring the delicate morsels as she dissects them alive, while they writhe in the exquisite ecstasy of her uncanny beauty.

USING MASK

Mask is a horrific minion — a monstrous villain every bit as twisted and evil as George Forsworn. She is obedient to the tiefling, but bends his instructions to give her the greatest freedom to harm and torment those she encounters. She accompanies George on his missions, supporting him with a variety of spells and supernatural abilities she acquired from her filthy pact with Shothragot.

Although Mask has a wide range of combat capabilities, her true strengths rest on her ability as a spy. Many of her capabilities are suited for information gathering, and thus she spends much of her time watching for her lover.

JALLARZI SALLAVARIAN

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +11, Wis +8, Cha +9
Skills Arcana +16, History +16, Intimidation +9, Investigation +11, Religion +11
Damage Resistances damage from spells; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Celestial, Common, Deep Speech, Primordial, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Commander of Evil. Jallarzi can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that she can see within 30 feet of her makes an attack roll or a saving throw (no reaction required). The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand Jallarzi. This trait doesn't function while Jallarzi is incapacitated.

Dark Knowledge. After Jallarzi makes an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, but before the outcome is determined, an additional d20 can be rolled. Jallarzi chooses which of the d20s rolled is used to determine the outcome. When she does so, she takes 12 (5d4) necrotic damage, which can't be reduced or prevented in any way.

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

Out-of-Phase Movement. Jallarzi can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. Each creature she moves through takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage; no creature can take this damage more than once per turn. Jallarzi takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Spellcasting. Jallarzi is an 18th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 19, +11 to hit with spell attacks). She can cast *darkness*, *fear*, and *misty step* at will and has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*
1st level (4 slots): *armor of Agathys*, *detect magic*, *inflict wounds*, *magic missile*
2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *enemies abound*, *lightning bolt*
4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*
5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *scrying*, *telekinesis*
6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *globe of invulnerability*
7th level (1 slot): *delayed blast fireball*, *divine word*
8th level (1 slot): *earthquake*, *feeblemind*
9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Actions

Multiattack. Jallarzi makes two comet staff attacks.

Comet Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage, or 10 (1d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage if used with two hands, and the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

Reactions

Bend Space. When Jallarzi would be hit by an attack, she teleports, exchanging positions with another star spawn she can see within 60 feet of her. The other star spawn is hit by the attack instead.

Blessing of Tharizdun. When Jallarzi takes damage, she can force each hostile creature within 10 feet of her to make a DC 19 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes half the damage Jallarzi took as psychic damage.

DESCRIPTION

The transformation left Mask's physical beauty largely intact, but destroyed her soul. She possesses a sleek body, alluring and athletic, and black hair tumbles down from her head. Beneath a queer mask, one can see brilliant blue eyes that flash with incredible power. A long, black cloak hangs from her shoulders providing some covering for her scantily clad body. The only unsettling thing about her physical form is that she has bundles of animated twigs, twisting and clawing, where her hands ought to be. Although monstrous in appearance, these claws retain the flexibility and use of normal hands.

JALLARZI SALLAVARIAN

Jallarzi was an archmage and a member of the Circle of the Eight. She set off to the Forgotten City to uncover more about the Seal of Binding and and its possible connection to Tharizdun, but she has been gone for a concerning amount of time, and all attempts to magically contact her have failed.

In the Forgotten City, Jallarzi discovered a supposedly inactive temple dedicated to Tharizdun. It was there that Jallarzi uncovered a magical ritual that draws upon the power of the Dark God to enhance a user's arcane magic. Perhaps Jallarzi was tempted by the allure of this amazing power, or maybe she was arrogant enough to believe she could wield this power without being corrupted by the Dark God. Maybe her mind was weakened by the unholy power radiating throughout the temple. In any case, Jallarzi performed this foul ritual, transforming herself into a star spawn seer and a servant of Tharizdun.

COMBAT

Between the space-warping abilities granted to her as a star spawn seer, the wizard spells she knew before her transformation, and the new spell options granted to her by the transformation ritual, Jallarzi has a wide variety of options that can be used in combat. While she might use the *invisibility* spell as part of an ambush, Jallarzi prefers using her spells to directly harm or debilitate her foes, and relies on her defensive abilities to keep her alive, rather than trickery or illusions. That said, the Seal of Binding's interference with Jallarzi's teleportation abilities force her to only use them in desperate situations. Jallarzi and her minions refuse to retreat and fight to the death.

Jallarzi leads a group of star spawn grues, manglers, and hulks. Many of these minions were summoned as a part of the ritual that transformed Jallarzi into an aberration, but perhaps some of them were already lurking in the Forgotten City beforehand.

THE ESSENCE OF EVIL

"...And in the last days, the sleep of a thousand years shall end when the herald appears, blotting out the sun in all its awesome glory. Its shuddering bulk shall sound the trumpets of destiny, those clarion calls to bring forth He Who Waits, the Dark God, the Wrongly Held. The 333 jewels that contain the dread master shall shatter, and the world shall tremble, wailing and clawing, begging their petty gods for escape from the wondrous return of the Unraveler, whose appearance shall set to right all wrongs, restore all balance, and reduce the abomination of creation to its primal, primitive state. Rejoice, for the end is at hand..."

"The Essence of Evil" is a Dungeons & Dragons adventure designed for four to six 20th-level characters. "The Essence of Evil" is designed to be the conclusion of a long campaign—a capstone to an excellent series of adventures. The plot is broadly sketched to allow Dungeon Masters to link it to nearly any campaign in any campaign setting. Alternatively, this adventure can make for a brutal stand-alone scenario, allowing players and DMs a deadly scenario to explore high-level games.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

In addition to the 5th edition *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*, this conversion references monsters found in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*. Beyond that, this document provides you with any new monsters, items, and content needed to run the adventure.

PREPARATION

"The Essence of Evil" is an unusual adventure in that it leaves much of what has come before to the DM to design. Suggestions and ideas are included here, but how this adventure site fits into your campaign is entirely at your discretion. You could, for instance, start at the dungeon's "doorstep", sending the party into a harrowing descent into madness and appalling evil, or you could seed the adventure background into an ongoing campaign to foreshadow the events described in these pages. Whatever you decide, this adventure will be a challenge, and its outcome could have lasting effects on your campaign setting, as is fitting for any scenario featuring an elder evil as the principle villain.

This adventure is designed for experienced DMs. It is a difficulty foray, featuring numerous monsters and adversaries with a broad range of abilities, in deadly environments, and with the fate of your campaign setting at stake. You could downplay any of these elements, altering the nature of the elder evil and recast the adventure to have less impact on your world. You can swap out monsters for those you feel have a stronger connection to your personal campaign setting, or even discard the adventure entirely and pull the creatures out to populate a dungeon of your own design. However you use this adventure, "The Essence of Evil" is bound to take your players to the brink and test their skills and abilities in ways they've never been tested before.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Few names strike as much fear as the dreaded Tharizdun. The Dark God has many names, looming large in the minds of every sentient race to walk the Material Plane. He is known as the Patient One, He of Eternal Darkness, while others call him the Elder Elemental Eye, the Ebon God, or by any of countless other appellations. All of these are masks—facades to conceal utter malevolence and evil. A god so powerful and so destructive, his mere existence compelled the gods of good and evil to set aside their differences and lock him away for all time. This is Tharizdun, the lord of entropy, the force of decay and destruction in the multiverse. He is the god of madness, the father of endings, and to some, he is the sire of elder evils.

In spite of the gods' efforts to contain this malign entity, Tharizdun's touch has not been far from mortal minds. In their dreams, their fantasies, their feverish thoughts, he whispers unspeakable secrets, driving mad those who would listen, seducing them with promises of power, wealth, the fulfillment of their lust, vengeance, and anything else he can to fill their souls with an unquenchable thirst to serve his awful will. He puts before his servants one dreadful task. He demands freedom—release from the hateful bonds that contain him in the far-flung prison deep inside the gloomiest depths of the Ethereal Plane. It is a task many have promised to fulfill but none have achieved, for the enemies of the Dark God are many and varied, drawn to oppose the certain destruction his release threatens. So it is that history is littered with corpses of Tharizdun's failed servants, of bold cultists cast down, and of entire civilizations brought to ruin for their allegiance to this foul master. To many, it seems Tharizdun is a tired threat, an old menace easily thwarted and one not worth committing the resources and heroes to defeat, for too often his minions find defeat. While some still remain committed to being vigilant against Tharizdun's endless legions, the cancer spreads and complacency blooms in the hearts of those that matter. It is but a matter of time before the world becomes too soft—too weak—to oppose him and his children, and that time is now.

Deep beneath a forlorn volcano, long dormant but active with the servants of the Elder Elemental Eye, lays a dreadful thing—a fragment of He of Eternal Darkness brought low ages ago by powerful magic. For centuries, the abomination has waited, growing fat on the prayers of those mortal above that gave their lives and those of their sacrifices to honor their insane master. Never content with such petty supplications, the entity divided its minions into factions and turned them against one another, compelling them to fight and murder, to harvest the souls of their brethren in evil. Each new death fed the elder evil, awakening a dire intelligence and a grim awareness until it took a name and found its purpose. It became Shothragot, the Herald of Tharizdun and the key to unlock the dread prison.

As it stirred and trembled, it called upon awful servants to slaughter those remaining enemies, to winnow the ranks of those divine servants who would stand against it as it blossomed into the fullness of its horrid form. It assumed control over the scattered cultists, compelling them to seek out the keys that would unlock the dark god's prison, to find the 333 Gems of Tharizdun and return them to it so the Herald might consume them and grow powerful on their energies. For eight long years, the Herald feasted, growing fat on the burgeoning wickedness, greedily swallowing the stones as quickly as they arrived. The last gemstone devoured, Shothragot is ready to seek out its dread master. It tears free from its hidden redoubt and drifts into the heavens to make its final journey.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Shothragot's sign of apocalypse is at full strength and the land shudders under the weight of the elder evil and its progress. Since Shothragot's agents murdered or imprisoned most other would-be champions and heroes, it falls to the player characters to attend to this apocalyptic threat. Fighting the elder evil itself is impossible since it is too big and too resilient to be destroyed from outside. Instead, the heroes must journey inside the elder evil, seek out its essence, and destroy it.

A number of complications combine to make this task extraordinarily difficult. First, there's the matter of reaching the elder evil. Certainly, characters of this level should have means to reach the mass by means of a *fly* spell, but note that so long as the glyph continues to burn in the heavens, teleportation spells automatically fail. Once the characters reach the elder evil, they have to find a way inside.

Within, the player characters learn there is no way to reach the essence of Shothragot due to a sealed portal that, thanks to the glyph, no longer functions and blocks the passage. Diminishing the glyph is possible if the characters destroy all of the *Gems of Tharizdun* (see area 4). This causes the glyph to recede and gives the party the chance to jump through the portal at area 6 to face the essence in area 22. Unfortunately, weakening the glyph also enables the elder evil to slip free from the Material Plane. Once there, the party must overcome the essence before it reaches Tharizdun's prison plane.

A better solution is to find the *torch of revealing* and the *incense of dreaming* (found in area 18). If the adventurers bring the lit torch to the portal, the light it radiates opens the portal and allows the party to slip through without releasing the elder evil.

WHAT THE PARTY KNOWS

As an elder evil, Shothragot's appearance in the world triggers the appearance of a sign of the apocalypse, a potent sigil that warns mortals of the impending doom. In the case of this abomination, the sign is of divine origin, a seal to contain the wickedness of this appalling entity and prevent its reunion with Tharizdun.

Undoubtedly, the player characters as well as countless others, have felt the sign intensify, catching sight of its manifestation, first in subtle ways, but growing more powerful as Shothragot grows in power. The Herald's particular sign manifests as the Seal of Binding, a strange glyph that spreads across the heavens to interfere with conjuration magic. For details on the sign's full effects, see page 2 of this document. At the start of *The Essence of Evil*, Shothragot's sign is at Overwhelming strength. If you intend to run this adventure as the conclusion of your campaign, consider revealing the sign earlier to signal the approaching doom.

Since noticing something is wrong is unavoidable, the player characters should have plenty of opportunity to research the sign's implications and associations and perhaps learn something more of Tharizdun in the process. Regardless of the party's preparations, the full weight of the threat reveals itself when Shothragot tears free from the Crater Ridge Mines and drifts into the sky toward the glyph burning in the heavens. Whatever the thing is, it aims to reach the fiery sign, and who can say what will happen when it reaches it?

WHAT THE PARTY DOESN'T KNOW

Bloated on the *Gems of Tharizdun*, the elder evil is ready to make its journey. However, it is contained by the fiery glyph in the heavens. As long as it remains, it cannot leave the Material Plane. Thus, the elder evil commands its servant Lareth the Beautiful to destroy the *Gems* it has swallowed, but the cleric is reluctant for it knows guardians protect the stones and he fears he lacks the power to destroy them. Thus the elder evil hovers until its servant finds the courage to do as he is bid.

Another complication is that as the elder evil grew, it attracted the noisome attention of all manner of fiends. Demons, elementals, and corrupted abominations have burrowed into its form, some to worship it, others to accompany it as it makes its passage into the Ethereal Plane. If the elder evil cares, it shows no sign and seems content to let the parasites exist for now.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The party can become involved in this adventure in a number of ways.

Sudden Appearance. The elder evil tears free from the earth in an enormous explosion that causes earthquakes and tidalwaves, and that also vomits up plumes of dust and debris into the atmosphere. Following the event, the elder evil appears in the sky, slowing climbing toward the fiery glyph that now spreads across the heavens as if it were some incredible world-spanning eldritch shield. As a result of the heavenly phenomena, magic is damaged, spells fail, and other, subtler effects take hold, plunging the world into turmoil. It falls to the party to fight this potent menace and put to right the world by eliminating it.

Impending Doom. Forages, prophets and mystics have foretold a coming calamity—warned all who would listen that the end was nigh. No one believed them until the skies ignited with flames and magic unraveled. As the sign intensified, the earth swelled and gradually there emerged a massive ball of darkness. The various churches and temples declared war on the thing, knowing the end of all things was at hand. The characters, along with others, are recruited to fight this menace. Tragically, all attempts to defeat the monstrosity have failed, leaving it to one final band of heroes to set things aright.

Planar Catastrophe. Shothragot emerges from the land on an alternate Material Plane only to be cast out by powerful magic, shunted into the Shadowfell. Drifting through the endless darkness and leaving a swathe of destruction in its wake, it finally emerges into the party's Material Plane. When it does, it tears a hole in reality, bringing with it a tide of horror. Legions of twisted shadow creatures spread like black ink across the land. While the people rally to fight back the hordes, the elder evil rages in the heavens sowing destruction wherever it goes. It's believed that if someone can destroy the abomination, the fiery glyph will vanish and allow the gods to lend their aid to fighting the shadowy hordes.

SETTING-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Although the elder evil described in this adventure has overt connections to Tharizdun, a major and enduring threat in the Greyhawk campaign setting, you can easily adapt this scenario for use with a variety of other game settings.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

In the *Forgotten Realms*, Shothragot is the Herald of Ghaunadaur. Created to wipe out mortal worshipers of his enemy gods, the Elder Eye uses the Herald to distract the gods while he mounts an offensive against his rivals. Using the power he steals from his defeated enemies, he plans to cast down Ao and seize the multiverse and the secrets of creation for himself. The party must stop the Herald before Ghaunadaur can make his move.

EBERRON

Forged by a powerful and nearly forgotten daelkyr warlord, Shothragot lays in wait for the moment its master calls. When foul agents of evil descend into the Khyber, they uncover Shothragot's resting place and awaken the abomination. Tearing loose from the ground, the elder evil intends to breach the bounds of reality and bring forth the Realm of Madness fully into the mortal realm.

DRAGONLANCE

Having been stirred to consciousness during the War of Souls, the Herald erupts from the soil to escape the Material Plane and seek out its maker, a fragment of Chaos locked inside the mysterious Void.

DEMIPLANE OF DREAD

Shothragot has torn free from a Material Plane, destroying it and everyone in it. As it drifts through the Ethereal Plane, the mists of the Demiplane of Dread ensnare it and draw it and all of its wickedness within the boundaries of the horrific plane. Shothragot cackles with glee as the Domain Lords vie and wage war against one another in the effort to claim the elder evil for themselves.

MYSTARA

Spawned by the united will of the Outer Beings, Shothragot instead emerges from the Nightmare Dimension intent on raining death and destruction upon the world. As it passes over the lands, it births countless abominations, seeding the world with creations born from the diseased minds of inexplicable forces of chaos and entropy.

DARK SUN

Believed to be a sentient fragment of the force responsible for the Dead Lands, the horror is born in a torrent of unleashed destruction. Rather than flying through the heavens, Shothragot spreads across the land, pulling itself along with its inky tentacles. Like spilled ink, what little life that remains on Athas is now in jeopardy unless bold heroes can stop the elder evil before it's too late.

BIRTHRIGHT

The Cold Rider awakens Shothragot in the hopes of using it to restore its former power and might, to regain the mantle of Azrai, the dark god. The elder evil drifts into the heavens to pierce the Evanescence and merge the Material Plane with the Shadow World, while the Cold Rider provokes its bestial servants to wage war across the lands in preparation for the dreadful event that could plunge this war-torn world into ruin.

EXANDRIA

Created by power of the Divine Gate, the Seal of Binding is used to prevent Shothragot from reuniting with Tharizdun. Seeking to free its master, Shothragot will attempt to shatter all six of the divine shackles that chain Tharizdun down at the bottom of the Abyss, allowing the Chained Oblivion to destroy the Divine Gate and to bring about the Epoch of Ends.

SPIRAL OF THE DARK GOD

Drifting in the heavens is a great ball of roiling darkness, an uncertain orb that shudders and writhes, belching forth its corruption to wash over the land. Horrid creatures fly about the mass, shrieking and gibbering in celebration of the Herald's passage. As it ascends, ever so slowly, the light of the fiery glyph shines in the heavens, intricately carved as if by the hands of the gods themselves.

KEY FEATURES

The elder evil's interior is a shuddering network of living tunnels, dripping passages filled with noxious fumes and beads of acid sweat oozing from the porous walls. The air is laden with the stench of rot and decay, and coarse hair reaches out to snatch those that pass by. Each chamber is a new vista of horror, twisted and corrupt, born from Tharizdun's insane mind.

Ceilings: Passages and chambers are usually as tall as they are wide.

Floors: Unless otherwise mentioned, all terrain in this dungeon is filled with animated hairs that reach up and coil about the legs of people exploring the tunnels. These hairs reduce a creature's walking speed by 10 feet, which is applied after any difficult terrain.

Walls: The walls of the complex are made from particularly tough flesh. The walls are immune to all damage. If a creature scores a critical hit against a 10-foot section of the wall with an attack, the section ruptures, and each creature within 30 feet of the wall take 35 (10d6) acid damage. The rupture clots and seals after 1 round.

Lighting: The entire place is dark—so dark it even mutes light sources brought inside. All sources of bright light become dim light, and all sources of dim light effectively cease to function. Characters with darkvision can see as normal.

Sounds: The elder evil's form is alive with noise; there's always some groaning sound, some distant shriek, or a deep and rumbling chuckle, as if the characters amused the place. Any Wisdom (Perception) check that relies on hearing has disadvantage.

DEFENSES

The elder evil is infested with creatures—dreadful beings trapped in the Material Plane because of its presence or horrors hoping to curry favor with the Dark God. The party is not in danger of encountering wandering monsters, but whenever they initiate an encounter that isn't in area 21, there is a 10% chance that Shothragot itself will respond excitedly to the violence. Should this occur, a portion of the wall somewhere in the room bulges as a black tumescent tumor forms. After 1 round, the tumor splits open in a torrent of caustic fluids, dealing 14 (4d6) acid damage to each creature within 20 feet of it. Following the vile fluid is a **black cyst** (page 5), an awful servitor of Shothragot. The newly created abomination attacks the closest creatures each round until it senses no other creatures near it. Once created, a black cyst remains until destroyed.

Feel free to use this spawning mechanism as a balancing lever for these encounters. If you find that the party is having too easy of a time in an encounter, you can simply cause a black cyst to spawn, making the fight more difficult.

MAGIC ITEMS

This section gives descriptions for the important items presented in this adventure.

GEM OF THARIZDUN

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

When Tharizdun was chained in his prison, sealed away for eternity, his last act was to contain fragments of his essence in 333 black gemstones that would enable his scions and servitors to unlock the shackles that bind him. Each gem is a fist-sized rock resembling obsidian, but queerly translucent if held to the light.

Each gem has an AC of 20, 10 hit points, vulnerability to radiant damage, and immunity to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage.

Most believe these gems to be simple baubles or props used by mad clerics in their rituals, but in truth, these items grant access to great power. You gain the following benefits (and drawbacks) while you are attuned to one of these gemstones and have it on your person.

Unholy Symbol. You can use the stone as a spellcasting focus.

Veil of Darkness. You have advantage on all saving throws.

Impose Will. You can use your action to cast the *dominate monster* spell (save DC 20). Once used, this property can't be used again until the next dawn.

Curse. Unfortunately, these stones are also infused with the raw essence of the Dark God, and those who carry these items soon feel the weight of their power in the form of madness and physical corruption.

Whenever you roll a 1 or 2 on the d20 when making an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, you take 21 (6d6) psychic damage, which can't be reduced or prevented in any way. You must then make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw with disadvantage. On a failed save, your alignment changes to chaotic evil. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, it also suffers one level of exhaustion.

After finishing a long rest, you can make another DC 20 Charisma saving throw with disadvantage. On a successful save, the alignment change ends. On a failed save, you suffer one level of exhaustion.

INCENSE OF DREAMING

Wondrous item, very rare

This cone-shaped block of incense gives off a spicy and unpleasant aroma.

When you burn incense of dreaming in a *torch of revealing*, it causes that torch to chase away the gloom found in temples and shrines dedicated to the Dark God and also reveals magically hidden items and features of these locations. Burning this incense outside of the torch produces no effects.

The secret of manufacturing this incense has long since been lost to the world.

PURPLE ROBE OF THARIZDUN

Wondrous item, very rare

This purple robe has a pointed hood and long sleeves that extend past the hands by at least 6 inches or more.

The purple robe of Tharizdun protects you from the magical cold peculiar to temples dedicated to the Dark God. It has no other function.

The secret of manufacturing these robes has long since been lost to the world.



TORCH OF REVEALING

Wondrous item, very rare

This black iron torch has a cupped head.

When you place *incense of dreaming* into the cup and light it, the torch of revealing casts bright violet light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet for 1 hour. This light fills the air with a dreadful chill.

These torches have a specific purpose: the revelation of specific, magically hidden objects within temples and shrines devoted to Tharizdun.

The secret of manufacturing these torches has long since been lost to the world.

ENCOUNTER AREAS

The following locations correspond to those indicated on the dungeon map above.

1. SUPPURATING VALVES

The elder evil's body floats above the surface of the world. Its altitude depends on how long it takes the party to reach it. For each day after its first appearance, it ascends 500 feet.

When the characters come within 100 feet of the elder evil, read:

The massive, spinning ball of glistening darkness hangs in the air, slowly and steadily rising into the firmament. Its surface writhes as if alive, and its foul fluid wars with waves of mud. Toxic fumes vent into the air. Plumes of black fire scorch the sky.

When the player characters come within 50 feet of an entrance, read:

A shuddering valve, fleshy in appearance, opens onto a dim passageway into the form's interior. Spilling forth from the wound is a torrent of bright purple fluid, which rains down on the land far below.

When the characters come within 50 feet of the elder evil, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Suppurating Valves (Encounter 1).

2. CYST OF MADNESS

Obox-Ob, the Prince of Vermin, brought with him a number of servants to safeguard his presence while in the company of the elder evil. Once inside the abomination, the fickle lord abandoned its scions and left them in this chamber to find their own fates.

When the characters come to the edge of the map, read:

Pools of phosphorescent fluid cast the chamber in ghastly lime-colored light. Several misshapen lumps of flesh quiver in the gloom.

When the characters enter the room, they trigger the combat encounter. The draudnus' truesight allows them to spot invisible or otherwise hidden characters.

Combat Encounter: Cyst of Madness (Encounter 2).

3. CRYING ROOM

The Crying Room takes its name from the violet condensation collecting on the walls of this odd chamber.

When the party enter this rooms, read:

The walls bleed a running violet fluid that dribbles down to collect into small puddles on the floor. Scattered around the place are loose coins and an assortment of oddities.

Believed by the denizens to be a place sacred to Tharizdun, those intelligent creatures inhabiting the elder evil occasionally make offerings here.

TREASURE

Scattered across the floor are 6,000 gp, a small inverted basalt pyramid studded with tiny amethysts (worth an additional 3,000 gp), an *elixir of health* (DMG 168), and a *robe of useful items* (DMG 195).

4. POOL OF MOLTEN ICE

This room houses a trio of the Dark God's servants. Charged with guarding the digested Gems of Tharizdun, these guardians attack anyone they deem to be an intruder.

As part of the safeguards that protect the gemstones, a prismatic wall trap stretches across the entrance of the room. This trap is created by a special form of the *glyph of warding* spell cast at 9th level. When the Pool of Molten Ice encounter is triggered and initiative is rolled (see below), the glyph releases a modified *prismatic wall* spell. This wall lasts until destroyed (rather than 10 minutes), and does not allow any creatures to pass through it harmlessly. Both spells have a spell save DC of 20.

Once the characters enter the chamber, read:

Murky water floods this large room and rising from the center is an island of dark stone studded with black jewels that reflect the light of two large balls of roiling fire hovering in the air on either side of the entrance.

When a character enters the water, or when a character touches the islands, the prismatic wall trap activates, and the characters trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Pool of Molten Ice (Encounter 3).

5. CARNAGE

When the elder evil consumed the last Gem of Tharizdun, cultists clambered to find a place within the abomination, to be carried forth and witness first-hand the power of the Dark God. Gathering in this chamber to chant their prayers and supplications, they waited for the appointed time. However, a molydeus in the service of Orcus had other plans.

After the demon prince of undeath learned of Obox-ob's interests in Shothragot, Orcus dispatched an enforcer to weaken the cult of the Elder Elemental Eye in the hopes of dashing the obyrith lord's plans. The demon arrived just as the elder evil made its destructive journey to the surface and, like others, it hitched a ride inside of its bulk. It followed the cultists into this room, where it immediately chopped them into bloody chunks of meat.

When the party enters this room, read:

The cause of this room's stench is soon made clear by the hundreds of dismembered corpses cooling in pools of their own blood throughout this massive chamber. Humans, kuo-toas, goblinoids, and more all lie scattered about in various forms of mutilation, congealing into a macabre carpet of flesh and gore.

If the party has not yet encountered the molydeus, they face it here.

Combat Encounter: Carnage (Encounter 4).

6. PUCE PORTAL

This room holds the portal that grants passage to the essence of Shothragot. Pounding on the gate is a frustrated inevitable. Any listener within 10 feet of the entrance of this room can hear the sounds of its hammering.

If the party has not yet destroyed the Gems of Tharizdun in area 4, read:

A pale yellow disk surrounded by a scorched ring of blackened flesh hangs against the far wall. Hammering against the disk is a large abstract being, its body made up of intricate clockwork sheathed in greenish-blue metal plating. Its head, a flattened disk, pivots to face your direction and a single blazing red eye fixes upon you.

The creature is a varakhut, an inevitable created to defend the gods and their works. It and several others like it appeared in the Material Plane shortly after the elder evil awakened. All of the other inevitables that made the journey met various nasty fates until only this construct remained of the original expedition. The varakhut is hostile to any creature it encounters inside the elder evil. It does, however, give the party long enough to explain their presence. Unless the party proves themselves to be friendly, the varakhut attacks, triggering a combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Puce Portal (Encounter 5).

Should the adventurers succeed on improving its attitude, it turns back to pounding on the portal, ignoring the party. Only if the characters prove themselves to be possible allies will it talk with them. The inevitable knows everything described in the adventure background and relates this information if asked. It offers to assist the party in their efforts to destroy the abomination and accompanies the adventurers so long as they make clear progress toward their goal. If the party falters, the varakhut abandons them.

INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS

If the party has destroyed the Gems of Tharizdun in area 4, read:

Lambent flames burn the walls all around a large disk of pulsing puce light. Vague shapes can be seen within. Monstrous things, dark and feminine, flit back and forth. The dim room beyond seems otherwise empty.

Alternatively, if the party brings a lit *torch of revealing* (see area 18) into this chamber, read:

When the eerie light of the torch falls upon the disk, the cloudiness vanishes and you can see clearly into a massive chamber. Four enormous stone statues stand guard over a great pit, where something black and profoundly evil throbs and groans.

With the light of the torch, the party can cross over and confront the essence of Shothragot in its lair (area 26).

Whenever the portal opens, the varakhut slips through the gate to attack the essence of Shothragot. Without help, the essence and its guardians make short work of the inevitable, destroying it after 3 rounds. If the party chooses to destroy the Gems of Tharizdun, you can choose to delay the varakhut's if you feel that they need its help during the final battle.

7. PITS AND PILLARS

Several traps ward this chamber. When the party enters this room, read:

Ten-foot wide pillars sculpted to resemble tortured human men and women, their flesh flayed from their bodies, fill this room.

In each space indicated on the main map, there are two invisible, magical traps of the transmutation school, one on the floor and another on the ceiling. Any pressure placed on a floor in these spaces causes them to swirl open, revealing a gap that travels through the elder evil and out into the open air below. A creature can avoid falling with a successful DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. Damage from the fall depends on the elder evil's altitude, but typically amounts to 70 (20d6) bludgeoning damage.

Characters flying or levitating in these spaces trigger the second trap, which causes the ceiling to open up and triggers a gust of wind that blow the victim up and out of the elder evil. A creature must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be blown out through the top of the elder evil fall as above, unless they can somehow stop the fall. Those that land on the exterior are subject to the elder evil's epidermis (see the Features of the Area section in the Suppurating Valves encounter).

8. CORRIDOR OF SIGHS

Numerous orifices whisper in the dark of this corridor, imparting fell secrets on those who traverse its length. When the characters enter this corridor, read:

A susurrus sounds as you press on through this corridor carrying with it faint whimpering noises and mournful cries.

Creatures with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher that pass through the area hear "the gems" repeated and mixed with sobs and cries. The noise emanates from the petitioners of Tharizdun, who, because their god is chained in the Ethereal Plane, have nowhere to go and are thus condemned to join the elder evil, trapped between worlds.

9. THE DARK GOD'S PRISON

Service to the Ebon God is difficult at best. Enemies oppose the god from all sides, even within the cult's own ranks. To make matters worse, mortal servants are often driven insane by the whispers of their unspeakable master, by the sights they see in their brief service, and by the knowledge of the doom they bring unto the world by chasing after the objectives of their foul master. Most cultists that lack the will to serve are destroyed because the Dark God doesn't tolerate weakness in his minions. Those who disappoint their master find terrible fates as is revealed by this room.

This chamber contains the raving servants of Tharizdun. Deemed flawed, the cult sealed them inside the cages and left them in the care of the scions of madness to guard.

When the characters reach the edge of the chamber, read:

The passage widens into a large chamber filled with smoke and fire. Narrow pathways wind through the conflagration, passing near black iron cages hanging from thick chains set into the ceiling.

When the characters enter the room, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: The Dark God's Prison (Encounter 6).

10. ANTECHAMBER

This odd room serves as the antechamber for a cluster of beholders in area 11. Seventy-feet up on the far wall are three large holes cut through the flesh of the elder evil by the beholders' disintegration rays. Unless the party goes to investigate or make a lot of noise, the beholders in the adjacent room are content to serve the whims of their hive mother.

When the characters enter this room, read:

This bleak chamber is cold and patches of ice cling to the walls and floor. The ceiling rises far above, and against the far wall, you see three brown waterfalls, frozen in motion by the chill of the room.

The waterfalls are actually the ichors of the elder evil, created by the tears in its flesh. The room is indeed below freezing, but the temperature is not a threat if the party doesn't linger for too long. This room is under the effects of the Extreme Cold hazard (DMG 110).

11. FETID CLUSTER

A cluster of mad beholders and their equally disturbing hive mother lair in this chamber. These deviant aberrations believe the elder evil is the avatar of the Great Mother and have come to pay fealty by infesting its foul form.

Three portals about 70 feet above area 10 cut through the dark hide of the elder evil and allow access to this chamber. The ice that coats the wall makes climbing perilous, requiring a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to make it, though characters likely have other means of accessing this chamber.

When the characters enter one of the portals, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Fetid Cluster (Encounter 7).

TREASURE

At the bottom of the unoccupied pit is the beholders' sacrifices to the Great Mother. They include a collection of gold and valuable gems with a combined worth of 10,000 gp and a platinum idol of the great mother that acts as a *stone of good luck* (DMG 205).

12. CHAMBER OF DELIGHTS

The door to this chamber is locked, and can be unlocked with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools, or forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. A *symbol* spell with the hopelessness effect is inscribed on the door (spell save DC 20), triggering if any creature that isn't a cultist of Tharizdun passes through the doorway.

When the characters examine the door, read:

A huge iron door stands before you. It is carved with hundreds of tiny screaming faces, their eyes weeping real tears that leave rusty streaks across the door's face.

Once the party opens the door, read:

A 10-foot-wide corridor with rough black walls stretches ahead some 40 feet before expanding into a larger chamber. Bones litter the corridor and the place reeks of decay.

At the end of the corridor, read:

An appalling mess of broken bodies and splattered gore covers this horrific chamber of death. A filthy purple carpet covers the floor, torn and stained with blood. Rising in the center is an altar of flesh, an unholy fusion of glistening organs that twitch with unlife.

This chamber was the site of a particularly gruesome ritual that saw the destruction of many innocents offered up by Lareth the Beautiful (see area 21) to Tharizdun. Resulting from this profoundly evil act, a potent deathshrieker was born.

If the characters walk down the corridor and enter the room, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Chamber of Delights (Encounter 8)

13. THE GAUNTLET

The klurichir demon in area 14 watches over this room from their lair. To deal with intruders, it has inscribed multiple *symbol* spells with the pain effect where indicated on the main map (spell save DC 20).

If the party triggers the trap, the demon casts *greater invisibility* followed by attacking with its Spines to lure the adventurers into area 14. If the characters don't take the bait, the demon comes after them, using tactics as described in the Demonic Sentinel encounter.

14. DEMONIC SENTINEL

This large chamber is the barracks for a deadly klurichir demon. Charged by Lareth the Beautiful to watch over the entrance nearby, this demon set up a nasty trap guarding the exits from area 13. The demon prefers to mount its attack from this room rather than engage the party in the area of the *symbol* spells, lest the demon itself triggers the wards. Thus, it hurls attacks into the adjacent room in the hopes of luring the party to its position and thus triggering the other glyphs safeguarding the entrances to this chamber.

When the party engages the demon, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Demonic Sentinel (Encounter 9)

15. FLESH CHAMBER

This disturbing chamber makes manifest the true nature of this dungeon.

When the characters enter this chamber, read:

The dark walls lighten as you make your way into the gloomy corridor. Eventually, rugged black walls give way to gray and then finally a pink surface when you come to the corridor's end. Pale green moisture collects on the walls and the entire place reeks of ammonia.

The walls here are indeed fleshy, and respond violently to biological matter. If a non-undead creature moves within 5 feet of the walls, or if the walls are targeted with an attack or damaging spell, the entire elder evil shudders, and every creature inside of it must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

Then, two **black cysts** emerge from the wall and attack the closest living creatures with their tentacles. The cysts seek to grapple these enemies and to hold them inside of the room, which has now begone to convulse violently. On initiative count 20 of the third round of combat, the entire corridor constricts and closes itself off, instantly killing any creature inside of it. The corridor relaxes and opens up again on initiative count 20 of the next round.

16. THE BLISTER

More cyst than chamber, a disgusting skin of congealed fluid holds back a corrosive flood.

If the characters examine the barrier, read:

A pliable membrane the color of sickness stretches taught across this passage.

It takes only one attack against an AC of 10 to break the membrane, which causes the acidic fluid inside of it to spray forth. Each creature within 30 feet of the blister must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Once the blister is broken, it reveals an empty chamber beyond.

17. KEEPERS OF THE EYE

Two deathdrinker demons protect this room. Contemptible creatures, Lareth the Beautiful enlisted them as guardians, posting them here to watch for intruders.

When the party enters this room, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Keepers of the Eye (Encounter 10).

18. THE EMISSARY

Rumors of the elder evil's existence and awakening have spread throughout the Infinite Layers of the Abyss, and various demon princes have each taken an interest in what Shothragot intends. Some are opposed to the machinations of the Chained God (such as Orcus), while others are keenly interested in seeing Tharizdun released. The main demon prince to seek an alliance is Obox-ob, whose own agenda is close to that of the Dark God. Obox-ob made his way to Shothragot to treat with the Dark God. Until the elder evil reaches Tharizdun's prison, the demon lord is content to wait here.

When the characters approach this room, read:

A foul stench emanates from this chamber, and from inside the gloom of this place, you hear the chittering of countless insects, each clicking and clacking as they scuttle in the dark.

Obox-ob is not interested in a fight since he has but one chance to encounter Tharizdun and defeat here would ruin his plans. Having nearly been slain once before, Obox-ob knows that an unnecessary risk could prove to be an insurmountable setback, especially if the party has not yet destroyed the Gems of Tharizdun in area 4. Rather than wiping out the party at once, he keeps himself concealed in the corner and uses telepathy to communicate with the party members. He questions them to find out where they have been, to confirm what he believes has been their mission, and to learn what progress they have made thus far. Obox-ob knows the sign of apocalypse contains the elder evil and it can complete its mission only if the sign is weakened. Thus, he is keenly interested in whether the characters have weakened the sign so far.

If the characters have not yet weakened the sign, Obox-ob suggests destroying the Gems of Tharizdun, claiming such an act would surely weaken the elder evil. Under no circumstances does Obox-ob mention the Puce Portal (area 6) and its ability to transport the party to the essence of Shothragot. If the characters know about the portal and attempt to discuss it with him, he may lie about its intended functionality. If he finds out about the varakhut, the demon lord might take action against it, whether by pitting the party members against it or by dealing with it himself.

Obox-Ob has little to gain from concealing his identity and should the characters ask, he reveals himself and that he, like the party, is an enemy of the tanar'ri. He explains his own quest to destroy the usurper race and claims he's been imprisoned here along with everyone else. A character that succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check knows Obox-ob is an ancient demon of a race that precedes the tanar'ri. A check that succeeds by 5 or more also reveals that Obox-ob seeks the annihilation of all things much like Tharizdun.

Obox-ob is well aware of the function of the *torch of revealing* and *incense of dreaming*. If queried about these items, he lies and suggests they are in fact worthless accoutrements of the Dark God's cultists.

If the characters try to take the items or otherwise prove themselves to be a threat to Obox-ob's plans, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: The Emissary (Encounter 11).

TREASURE

Hanging from two hooks near the portal to area 19 are four *purple robes of Tharizdun*. In addition, a *torch of revealing* sits in an iron scone and from it hangs a purple pouch containing four blocks of *incense of dreaming*.

19. TEMPLE OF SHADOW

An impenetrable darkness fills this room, defeating any light source, magical or otherwise, brought into this room. Only a character with a lit *torch of revealing* can see the room as it actually is.

In addition to the darkness, the room carries an incredible chill. Anyone not wearing a *purple robe of Tharizdun* takes 7 (2d6) cold damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage at the end of every minute spent in the temple. Anyone unprotected that touches a metal object takes an additional 7 (2d6) cold damage, while characters wearing metal armor take 7 (2d6) cold damage per round spent in this room.

If a character enters the room with the lit torch, read:

The queer violet light of the torch reveals a dreadfully cold, disturbing chamber. Three obsidian pillars veined with lilac worms support a soft and dripping ceiling overhead. The floor is equally giving and puddled with sickening green fluid that reflects the light strangely, offering up images of dancing demonic figures, scenes of death and carnage, and worse. Opposite from the entrance is a great altar of basalt, constructed to resemble an upside-down ziggurat with two steps. It is the source of the impossible darkness and it holds your eye, as if seeking to draw you inside its depths.

THE OBEX

Any living creature that looks upon the Obex—the strange altar—must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature is stunned for 1 minute or until it is pulled out of the room. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. On a successful save, the effect ends on the creature. On a failed save, the creature takes 55 (10d10) psychic damage. If this damage reduces a target to 0 hit points, its soul is wrenched from its body and absorbed by the Obex, where it is utterly destroyed. A creature slain in this way can't be revived by any means short of a *wish* spell.

If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the effects of the Obex for the next 24 hours.

The Obex has an AC of 10 and 300 hit points, is vulnerable to radiant damage, and is immune to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. A **black cyst** emerges from the when the Obex is reduced to 200 hit points, and again at 100 hit points. If the altar is destroyed, the darkness and the chilling effect in the temple end, and the essence of Shothragot permanently suffers disadvantage on all attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

20. TEMPLARS OF THARIZDUN

As the elder evil pulled itself free from the earth, those surviving cultists clambered inside to accompany the abomination on its journey. The fate these servants found was death, violent and painful, at the hands of a dread demon. The only survivors of this original band were Lareth the Beautiful and his companions. While powerful in their own right, they are terrified by the forces at work inside the elder evil and rightly believe that if they venture far from their quarters they might be added to the ranks of the dead.

Since entering the temple, visions of the Gems of Tharizdun have plagued Lareth, along with a powerful compulsion to destroy them. He's tried to convince his allies to assist him, but neither one seems willing to risk his life on such a venture.

Although disappointed at the treatment they have received in the service of the Dark God, they are not so naïve to think they have any chance at redemption. Consequently, when confronted with a party of adventurers, each templar is prepared to fight to the death.

When the characters enter the room, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: Templars of Tharizdun (Encounter 12).

Taking Prisoners: Captured templars are wholly uncooperative and prove to be difficult prisoners at best. Of the three, only Lareth knows how to get through the portal without destroying the Gems, though he's loathe to reveal this since he knows Tharizdun will punish him. If the party intimidates the other two, they admit they believe the Gems might be the key to reaching the essence.

21. THE ESSENCE OF SHOTHLAGOT

The Essence of Shothragot is the mind and soul of the elder evil and serves as the focus of all its malevolence. If destroyed, the elder evil's body collapses in on itself, imploding and leaving nothing behind. The only way to stop this abomination and thwart its plans is to destroy the essence and thus spare countless Material Planes the destruction Tharizdun promises.

The only way to reach the Essence is through the Puce Portal (area 6), which activates only if the elder evil's sign is diminished or if the party finds the *torch of revealing*. Once the party fulfills these requirements, they are free to enter the portal.

When the party enters the portal, they trigger the combat encounter.

Combat Encounter: The Essence of Shothragot (Encounter 13).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The ideal outcome for this adventure is for the characters to navigate the perils of the elder evil's body, find a way through the portal, venture to the essence, and defeat it. With its destruction, the elder evil dies and decays rapidly, depositing the player characters several hundred feet over the surface of their world or stranding them in the Ethereal Plane. At your option, the party might appear before the elder evil's prison plane and be the first mortals to look upon the awful demesne of Tharizdun, a sanity-blasting experience to be sure.

Failure does not necessarily indicate the end of all things as the release of Tharizdun seems to suggest. If the party used the *torch of revealing*, but still failed to defeat the elder evil, Lareth, if he still lives, eventually destroys the Gems of Tharizdun, enabling the elder evil to escape the Material Plane and embark on its final journey. Faced with such a dreadful end, the gods themselves attend to the abomination. Unfortunately, the elder evil's maddening powers drives them insane, causing them to fight one another, which could have incredible repercussions in your campaign.

Whether or not Shothragot reaches its master is ultimately left to you, but such an event could reshape your world and prepare the way for something entirely new. Whatever you decide, the emergence and destruction of Shothragot is a signature event that can have sweeping change on your setting, making a fight with this monster a thrilling conclusion for your campaign.



ENCOUNTER 1: SUPPURATING VALVES

This encounter pits the party against two creatures of evil elemental air that seek to stop them from entering the elder evil's body.

SETUP

Two **cyclonic ravagers** (C), unwholesome thralls from the Elemental Plane of Air, guard the entrances to the elder evil. They attack any creature that comes within 50 feet of a valve.

There are three locations keyed to this encounter. If a fight breaks out at one, the others do not come to help.

When the characters come within 50 feet of an entrance, read:

The light breeze disperses much of the awful stench but suddenly whips up into a screaming gale. To either side, you see two large funnel clouds form and spin toward you.

TACTICS

Both cyclonic ravagers use their Buffeting Winds to disperse the intruders, sending some against the outer walls of the elder evil, others into acidic waterfalls, and move lightly armored spellcasters to well within the ravager's reach. Characters on the decks of vehicles, flying carpets, and similar conveyances that fail their Strength saves may fall off to plummet to the ground. Thereafter, the cyclonic ravagers use their regular attacks to harass the intruders - one chooses to enter melee range, while the other sits back and attacks from range.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



ACIDIC WATERFALL

Spilling forth from the valve is a torrent of thin acid. Any creature that enters a space containing acid, including those beneath the waterfall, must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

CONTRACTING ENTRANCE

Once every 1d4 rounds, the valve seals shut at initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). Any creature standing on the edge of the entrance must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage as the walls close. Those who succeed on the save may place themselves beyond the walls or inside the complex. A closed valve reopens after 1d4 rounds.

ELEMENTAL BURSTS

The elder evil's epidermis is an unholy fusion of all four elements—air, earth, fire, and water, and periodically, the instability of its form unleashes a burst of elemental energy. Any creature within 20 feet of the elder evil's exterior has a 10% chance of being exposed to such a burst. If so, the target must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) acid, bludgeoning, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (DM's choice) plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

EPIDERMIS

The elder evil's outer walls writhe with profane energies. Any living creature that touches the elder evil's outer walls must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.

CYCLONIC RAVAGER

Large elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 15
Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)
Speed 0 ft., fly 90 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +7, Cha +7
Damage Resistances lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Auran, Common
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Air Form. The ravager can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Buffeting Winds. The ravager constantly emits an aura of winds out to a range of 30 feet. Small or smaller flying creatures or objects can't pass through the aura. Arrows, bolts, and other ordinary projectiles that pass through the aura are deflected away and automatically miss. (Boulders hurled by giants or siege engines, and similar projectiles, are unaffected.) Creatures in gaseous form can't pass through it.

In addition, at the end of each of the ravager's turns, each creature in the aura that isn't immune to being grappled must make a DC 17 Strength saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. On a failed save, the creature is knocked prone, and if the creature is Large or smaller, the ravager can move it up to 30 feet in any direction.

Smite of Seven Winds. When the ravager hits with an attack, it can choose to push the target up to 10 feet away from the ravager in a straight line. This distance increases to 20 feet on a critical hit.

Actions

Multiattack. The ravager makes three attacks. It can also use Storm Surge if it is available.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Air Blast. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Storm Surge (Recharge 5–6). Until the start of its turn, the radius of the ravager's Buffeting Winds increases to 60 feet, and its damage increases to 36 (8d8) bludgeoning damage.

ENCOUNTER 2: CYST OF MADNESS

This encounter has the party face the abandoned servants of Obox-ob.

SETUP

Have the players place their miniatures at the bottom of the map in the entrance. Once they are positioned, place the draudnus (S) where indicated on the map. When the party enters the room, read:

A number of three-legged creatures rise from the floor of this irregularly-shaped chamber, fixing their multitudinous eyes upon you.

TACTICS

The demons herd the characters to spaces containing acid and use flesh hook attacks to pin them in place. The demons prioritize their attacks against lightly armored characters and then fall back to lure warriors deeper into the room.

DEVELOPMENTS

The molydeus in area 5 automatically hears a pitched battle in this location. Starting on the second round, it moves 60 feet each round, joining the combat 3 rounds into the combat. It hates the draudnus as much as it hates the party and attacks the closest creature each round. See Encounter 5 for tactics.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



ACID POOLS

These acid pools are 1 foot deep and count as difficult terrain. When a creature moves into the acid's space for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there, it takes 3 (1d6) acid damage. Somehow adding an equal amount of water dilutes the acid so that it deals no damage.

LIGHTING

Illumination from the acid pools fills this chamber in dim light.

RUBBLE

A space containing rubble counts as difficult terrain.

DRAUDNU

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 142 (15d8 + 75)
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +7, Cha +9
Skills Athletics +7, Perception +7
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, psychic
Damage Immunities acid, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, prone
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Abyssal, Common, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the draudnu can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Corrosive Skin. A creature that touches the draudnu or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Freedom of Movement. The draudnu ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can't reduce its speed or cause it to be restrained. It can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

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

Overwhelming Madness. When a creature that isn't an obyrith starts its turn within 30 feet of one or more draudnus, it must make a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage and must subtract a d4 from each of its attack rolls and saving throws until the start of its next turn. This die increases to a d6 if there are three or four draudnus, and to a d8 if there are five or more.

Standing Leap. The draudnu's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. The draudnu makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Flesh Hook. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, the draudnu can detach the hook and force the target to make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target is skewered by the flesh hook, and the draudnu regrows a new hook immediately. While skewered, a creature's speed is reduced by 10 feet, plus 5 feet for every additional flesh hook that is skewering it. When the draudnu detaches its flesh hook, it can attempt to fasten the target to a surface such as a floor or wall within 5 feet of the target. When this happens, the target is also restrained to the surface by the flesh hook on a failed save. A creature within 5 feet of the flesh hook can use its action to make a DC 15 Strength check. On a success, the skewered target takes 6 (1d12) piercing damage, and the flesh hook is removed.

Acid Spray. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (6d4 + 6) acid damage.

ENCOUNTER 3: POOL OF MOLTEN ICE

This encounter has the party fight the evil elementals that guard the Gems of Tharizdun.

SETUP

Guarding this chamber is a **waterveiled assassin** (EdE 21) and two **inferno tyrants**. The creatures detest the other and they frequently trade insults in Common. However, sounds of combat from an adjacent room cause them to be silent. Place the inferno tyrants (H) on the map where indicated. Wait to place the waterveiled assassin (W) on the map until its turn or until a character has line of sight to its position and is able to locate it despite its attempt to hide. If any character touches the water or lands on the island, or if the party trigger the prismatic wall trap, read:

The balls of fire unfold into vague humanoid shapes, flaring brightly above the waters and emanating waves of heat from their forms.

When the waterveiled assassin reveals itself or is spotted, read:

Surging from the foul water is a great tidal wave and in its midst, a grotesque face forms and looses a dreadful howl.

TACTICS

Both inferno tyrants position themselves to be as far away from the party as possible. They then let loose their Fire Blasts against the party. Should any of the characters close on the elementals, neither hesitates to use their Flame Wave ability.

Meanwhile, the waterveiled assassin stays underwater but moves to shore's edge to threaten opportunity attacks against enemies that attempt to move past it. It could try to get a Sneak Attack off on an unsuspecting enemy, or it could wait for the perfect moment to line up its Water Jet action and to hit many enemies with it at once. Should any enemy enter the water or engage the waterveiled assassin in melee, the assassin moves to engulf the hapless victim with its Whelm action.

If the characters negate the prismatic wall trap, the inferno tyrants pursue the characters. The waterveiled assassin stays behind.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters have yet to deal with the Molydeus in area 5, it moves to investigate the sounds of combat, arriving in 2 rounds. The demon is as likely to attack the party as it is the elementals, so it trains its attacks on the closest foe each round.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



ISLAND

The island rising from the center of the pool is difficult terrain.

TREASURE

Behind the island and under the water is a *bag of holding*. Finding the bag requires a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If located, opening it reveals 1,000 gp, a holy symbol of Ioun, and a 5th level *spell scroll* (DMG 204) with the *flame strike* cleric spell, which could potentially be used to destroy all 333 gems of Tharizdun at once. The elder evil swallowed the bag along with a recovered gem of Tharizdun months ago.

WATER

The water in this room is 60-feet deep and is stagnant. Efforts to destroy or remove the water work for 1 round before more fluid seeps from the walls to restore it to its proper depth.

CONCLUSION

Embedded all over the island are the 333 Gems of Tharizdun. Prying a gem free from the rock requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. For every 111 gemstones destroyed, the essence of Shothragot loses one of its Legendary Resistances. In addition, destroying all the gems reduces the Seal of Binding's intensity by one step.

Inferno Tyrant

Large elemental, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 50 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Ignan

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Combustion. When the tyrant causes a creature or flammable object to ignite, the target takes 10 (3d6) fire damage at the start of each of its turns until someone takes an action to douse the fire.

Fire Aura. At the start of each of the tyrant's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 10 (3d6) fire damage, and flammable objects in the aura that aren't being worn or carried ignite. A creature that touches the tyrant or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Fire Form. The tyrant can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. In addition, the tyrant can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 10 (3d6) fire damage and ignites.

Illumination. The tyrant sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light in an additional 30 feet.

Water Susceptibility. For every 5 feet the tyrant moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The tyrant makes three attacks.

Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) fire damage. On a critical hit, a creature also suffers one level of exhaustion, unless it has resistance or immunity to fire damage. Any levels of exhaustion caused by this effect go away after 1 minute.

Fire Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites.

Flame Wave (Recharge 5–6). The tyrant generates a wave of flame that rolls out from its body. Each creature within 30 feet of the tyrant must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Encounter 4: Carnage

This encounter has the party face off against a molydeus that serves the will of Orcus.

Setup

The **molydeus** (MTF 134) occupies a spot indicated on the map (M) if the party come from the bottom. Otherwise, it starts on the opposite side if they come from the top. When the molydeus is spotted, read:

Charging toward you, barking a challenge from both its vicious wolf head and its spitting serpent head, is a massive fiend drenched in blood. It grips a terrifying battleaxe stained black with gore and flings droplets of blood into the air as the horror whips the blade about.

Tactics

Knowing that it can't use its *teleport* spell until the Seal of Binding has diminished, the molydeus relies on a straightforward approach, letting loose its Multiattack on the closest creature it can. After the rest of its enemies have shown what they are capable of, the molydeus uses its Move legendary action to charge the biggest threat with impunity. It casts *lightning bolt* only if it can hit a clear majority of the enemies in the room.

Features of the Area



Bloody Bodies

Spaces containing these bloody bodies are difficult terrain.

ENCOUNTER 5: PUCE PORTAL

This encounter has the party face a varakhut, an inevitable construct and enemy of Shothragot.

SETUP

Place the **varakhut** (V) where indicated on the map. Have the players put their miniatures near the entrance of the map unless they first parlayed with the inevitable, in which case they may place their miniatures wherever they wish in the room. When the varakhut attacks, read:

The fiery red eye flares with outrage as it intones dread words of grave magical power.

TACTICS

On its first turn in combat, the varakhut casts *chain lightning* in order to wipe out any cohorts, followers, and animal companions. The following round, it activates its Antimagic Cone and aims it at any spellcasters it has identified. It then dances around the battlefield, using its Antimagic Cone to disable spellcasters while still leaving a few targets open to attack with its spells and other abilities.

Note that the varakhut will attempt to conserve some of its spells for use against the elder evil. Unless it is significantly threatened, it will hold off on using *force cage* and will save at least one use of both *disintegrate* and *hold monster*.

The varakhut, being a defender of the gods, has little interest in destroying divine servants, even ones it suspects of being in cahoots with the elder evil. Rather than attacking these creatures, the varakhut uses *dominate monster* to force them to fight at its side and aid it in its quest to destroy the elder evil and its minions.

BEFRIENDING THE INEVITABLE

Even after combat begins, the party may persuade the inevitable of their intentions. As an action, a character may attempt to make a Charisma (Persuasion) check with the goal of calming the varakhut. The check is made with advantage if a character shows themselves to be divine servants of some sort. The number of checks required to achieve diplomacy as well as the DC of each check is up to you, but you may use 16 as the default or starting DC.

If the party successfully improves relations with the inevitable, it breaks off the attack and returns to its pounding. It takes additional convincing for the inevitable to believe that the party is not a threat, at which time it will release or end any hostile spells it cast during combat.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



PORTAL

While the elder evil's sign is at overwhelming strength, the portal does not function. Only when the light of a *torch of revealing* shines upon its surface can the party make the journey to area 22. Otherwise, the party must destroy the Gems of Tharizdun in area 4.

VARAKHUT

Large construct (inevitable), lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 225 (18d10 + 126)
Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	19 (+4)	24 (+7)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +10, Wis +12, Cha +11
Skills Arcana +16, Insight +12, Perception +18, Religion +10
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison, radiant
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 28
Languages all
Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

Antimagic Cone. The varakhut's head emits an area of antimagic, as in the *antimagic field* spell, in a 60-foot cone. At the start of each of its turns, the varakhut decides which way the cone faces and whether the cone is active.

Immutable Form. The varakhut is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Innate Spellcasting. The varakhut's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *chain lightning*, *dispel magic*, *locate creature*
3/day each: *counterspell*, *dimension door*, *disintegrate*
2/day each: *divine word*, *geas*, *hold monster*
1/day each: *dominate monster*, *forcecage*, *plane shift*

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

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

Actions

Multiattack. The varakhut makes two attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 force damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Force Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 force damage, and the target is pushed up to 5 feet away from the varakhut if it is Large or smaller.

Legendary Actions

The varakhut 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. The varakhut regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The varakhut flies up to half its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Attack. The varakhut makes one attack.

Dispelling Blast (Costs 2 Actions). The varakhut makes a Force Blast attack. On a hit, the target's concentration is also broken, and any spell of 6th level or lower on the target ends.

Force Beam (Costs 2 Actions). The varakhut unleashes a magical beam of force in a line that is 5 feet wide and 100 feet long. Each creature in the area must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 25 force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ENCOUNTER 6: THE DARK GOD'S PRISON

This encounter pits the party against the wardens of the Dark God's Prison.

SETUP

The **scions of madness** (M) are positioned where shown on the map. Smoke and fire conceals them, so wait to place them until the party spots them. Have the players place their miniatures anywhere at the bottom of the map, but not on the paths or in the burning cinders. When a character enters a space adjacent to the **effigy** (E), read:

Hanging from the ceiling on a thick iron chain is a cage holding a smoking prisoner, its face blackened by the flames. Its mouth stretches wide, frozen in a perpetual scream. Bits of cloth, still aflame, cover the remains of the wretched inhabitant. Suddenly, a cloud of fire leaks out of the corpse's mouth and eyes, soon followed by the reduction of its entire body to ash. What remains is some sort of transparent humanoid shape cloaked in fire.

When a character first comes within 30 feet of a scion of madness, read:

Striding forth from the smoke and fire is a 10-foot-tall brute hunched over and wearing a purple cloak. Under its cloak, you catch glimpses of a deformed face and hands, suggesting that this creature has humanoid origins. The creature mutters a prayer under its breath and steps forward, ready to slay the intruders that stand before it.

TACTICS

When a scion of madness first perceives a foe, it spends its turn casting *circle of power*, unless it can perceive another scion concentrating on the same spell. It then leaps forward, looking to catch as many enemies as it can with its *destructive wave*. The scions will communicate with each other in Deep Speech, ideally having two scions fighting in melee range while the third casts spells from a distance. If desperate, a scion will cast *fear*, hoping that the spell will buy it some time to retreat.

The effigy slips loose from its cage whenever a character comes within 10 feet of it. Whenever it can, the effigy uses *Infuse* to attempt to possess the nearest enemy. While waiting for the ability to recharge, the effigy attacks using its Life Drain. Once it has successfully possessed a character, or if it is reduced to half of its hit points or fewer, the effigy uses *Fiery Death* to take out as many characters as it can. The effigy does not care for the scions of madness, but will make an effort to avoid harming them.

DEVELOPMENTS

By default, the caged cultists in this room are either dead or entirely insane and cannot provide any useful information to the party. However, if this adventure is the conclusion to a full campaign, you may wish to place some familiar faces in this prison for the party to encounter. The best candidates are important cultists that the players have defeated in the past, yet were left alive or otherwise were able to avoid an untimely death. However, you may also place allied NPCs in this prison, assuming that these NPCs were valuable to Shothragot and thus were not immediately killed.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



SMOKE

This room is filled with smoke, lightly obscuring everything in the area. On its turn, a creature can choose to hold its breath until the start of its next turn. If it doesn't hold its breath, or if the target is forced to breath at some point afterwards, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. A creature can only be forced to make this save once per round. The scions of madness are accustomed to the poor air and are immune to its effects.

FLAMING CINDERS

A creature takes 14 (4d6) fire damage whenever it moves into a space containing flaming cinders for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there.

FIRE JET

When a creature steps into one of these four spaces (marked with a flame symbol on the map), the jet is triggered. Each creature within 10 feet of the jet's horizontal position must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

CAGES

These cages hang 10 feet above the floor. Opening one requires thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check to unlock it, or a successful DC 18 Strength check to force it open.

OFFERING

A *belt of storm giant strength* (DMG 155) lies on a rocky outcropping toward the back of the room (marked O on the map). Once owned by a mighty champion of Kord, the belt was left here to melt to slag after their brutal murder.

SCION OF MADNESS

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 149 (13d12 + 65)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +9, Cha +5
Skills Athletics +9, Perception +9
Damage Resistances psychic
Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 19
Languages Common, Deep Speech
Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Dark Devotion. The scion has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Innate Spellcasting. The scion's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: bane, contact other plane, fear
3/day each: contagion, destructive wave, mass healing word
1/day each: circle of power, divine word, finger of death

Third Eye. The scion can see through solid objects to a range of 30 feet; when it does so, it perceives objects as ghostly, transparent images.

Actions

Maddening Grasp. Melee Spell Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 27 (4d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 19) if it is Large or smaller. Until this grapple ends, the target must make a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On a failed save, the target takes 27 (6d8) psychic damage and is driven insane until the end of the scion's next turn. While insane, the target is incapacitated, can't understand what other creatures say, can't read, and speaks only in gibberish.

EFFIGY

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15
Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)
Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +10, Cha +11
Damage Resistances acid, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Cold Susceptibility. If the effigy takes cold damage, it has disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws until the end of its next turn.

Fire Form. A creature that tries to touch the effigy or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Illumination. The effigy sheds bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet.

Incorporeal Movement. The effigy can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Multiattack. The effigy makes two melee attacks.

Life Drain. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 27 (4d10 + 5) necrotic damage plus 14 (4d6) fire damage. The target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Fiery Death (Recharge 6). Each creature in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on the effigy must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) fire damage plus 35 (10d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Infuse (Recharge 6). One humanoid that the effigy can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 19 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the effigy; the effigy then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The effigy now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The effigy can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its Cold Susceptibility, Fire Form, Illumination, alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possessed target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. It takes 14 (4d6) fire damage and suffers one level of exhaustion on a failed save, and the possession ends on a successful one. The possession also ends if the body drops to 0 hit points, the effigy ends it as a bonus action, or the effigy is turned or forced out by an effect like the dispel evil and good spell. When the possession ends, the effigy reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this effigy's Infuse ability for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

ENCOUNTER 7: FETID CLUSTER

This encounter pits the party against a cluster of beholders and their hive mother.

SETUP

Place the **hive mother** (H) where indicated on the map. Choose two of the beholder pits to hold the other **beholders** (MM 28), but wait to place them until their turn. Have the players place their miniatures near the lip of the portal when the encounter begins.

If the hive mother hears the sounds of climbing characters, conversation, or any other noises, she readies an action to use her Eye Rays, with all three rays targeted at the first intruder she sees.

When the first character reaches the edge of the portal, read:

Hovering in the air is a spheroid creature bristling with eyestalks and razor-sharp plates of chitin and bone. Orange corruption oozes from numerous rents and fissures in its hide. Burst blisters weep an equally noxious substance and its many rheumy eyes glare in outrage. Its broad mouth spreads in a frown causing a fresh torrent of slime to spill onto the floor. Numerous pits pierce the floor. Statues of robed men and women stand scattered throughout the chamber, all carved in terrified positions.

The beholders that hide in the pits reveal themselves on their turns, rising just far enough for their eyestalks to crest the lips of the pits. Whenever a beholder emerges from the pit, read:

A forest of dripping eyestalks climbs up from the darkened pit to look around.

TACTICS

Having been prepared to use their eye rays, the hive mother and her lesser kin, which are permanently charmed by the hive mother, deactivate their Antimagic Cones. The hive mother fires her eye rays at as many intruders as she can, and the two beholders follow up with their own eye rays directed at any enemy that fails their saving throw against one.

Once the hive mother is reduced to half of her hit points or fewer, she uses Protect Mother on a charmed intruder, or on one of her lesser kin if necessary. She then orders these minions to use their Antimagic Cones to disable any enemy spellcasters, while still allowing the hive mother to use her eye rays if possible. If she can't get her eye rays off, she enters melee range and uses her bite on the safest target possible. The beholders fight to the death and may pursue the party if they flee this chamber.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



Foul Ice

Spaces containing this brown ice act as Slippery Ice (DMG 110).

Beholder Pits

The beholders carved out 10-foot wide pits that are 70 feet dip in which to hide from the hive mother's wrath. A beholder that partly emerges gains three-quarters cover and may use its eyestalks but not its central eye.

Statues

The characters aren't the first ones to attack the beholders. Shattered fragments of creatures petrified by the beholders' Petrification Rays can be found scattered across the floor. Among those that are intact enough to be saved are an insane **mage** (MM 347) that escaped from The Dark God's Prison (see area 9), a stoic **knight** (MM 347) in service of a good-aligned deity, and an oblivious **druid** (MM 346) that isn't quite sure how they got there.

HIVE MOTHER

Huge aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 230 (20d12 + 100)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +10, Wis +9, Cha +10
Skills Perception +14
Condition Immunities prone
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 24
Languages Common, Deep Speech, Undercommon
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

All-Around Vision. The hive mother can't be surprised, and attack rolls against it can't benefit from advantage. This trait doesn't function while the hive mother is incapacitated.

Antimagic Cone. The hive mother's central eye creates an area of antimagic, as in the *antimagic field* spell, in a 300-foot cone. At the start of each of its turns, the hive mother decides which way the cone faces and whether the cone is active. The area works against the hive mother's own eye rays.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 21 (4d8 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be swallowed by the hive mother. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the hive mother, and it takes 35 (10d6) acid damage at the start of each of the hive mother's turns. If the hive mother takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the hive mother must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the hive mother. If the hive mother dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Dominate Beholder. The hive mother targets one beholder or beholderkin it can see within 60 feet of it. The target must make a DC 18 Charisma saving throw. On a successful save, the target is immune to this feature for 1 hour. On a failed save, the target is charmed by the hive mother for 1 hour. While charmed in this way, the target must follow the hive mother's orders to the best of its ability. This effect ends if the hive mother or its companions deal damage to the target. If the hive mother loses control of a dominated beholder, the hive mother immediately senses the loss of control, and knows the position and distance to the beholder at the time control was lost.

Eye Rays. The hive mother shoots three of the following magical eye rays at random (reroll duplicates), choosing one to three targets it can see within 120 feet of it:

1. **Charm Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by the hive mother for 1 hour, or until the hive mother harms the creature.
2. **Paralyzing Ray.** The targeted creature 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.

3. **Fear Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened 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.

4. **Slowing Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target's speed is halved for 1 minute. In addition, the creature can't take reactions, and it can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

5. **Enervation Ray.** The targeted creature must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

6. **Telekinetic Ray.** If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or the hive mother moves it up to 30 feet in any direction. It is restrained by the ray's telekinetic grip until the start of the hive mother's next turn or until the hive mother is incapacitated.

If the target is an object weighing 900 pounds or less that isn't being worn or carried, it is moved up to 30 feet in any direction. The hive mother can also exert fine control on objects with this ray, such as manipulating a simple tool or opening a door or a container.

7. **Sleep Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or fall asleep and remain unconscious for 1 minute. The target awakens if it takes damage or another creature takes an action to wake it. This ray has no effect on constructs and undead.

8. **Petrification Ray.** The targeted creature must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature begins to turn to stone and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.

9. **Disintegration Ray.** If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 54 (12d8) force damage. If this damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, its body becomes a pile of fine gray dust.

If the target is a Large or smaller nonmagical object or creation of magical force, it is disintegrated without a saving throw. If the target is a Huge or larger object or creation of magical force, this ray disintegrates a 10-foot cube of it.

10. **Death Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 66 (12d10) necrotic damage. The target dies if the ray reduces it to 0 hit points.

Legendary Actions

The hive mother 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. The hive mother regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The hive mother flies up to its speed.

Eye Ray. The hive mother uses one random eye ray.

Command Beholder. The hive mother targets one allied beholder or beholderkin within 60 feet of it. The target can use its reaction to use one random eye ray; when it does so, it can make two rolls and select either result.

Protect Mother (Costs 2 Actions). The hive mother targets one creature within 60 feet of it that is charmed by the hive mother. Until the end of the hive mother's next turn, the target has disadvantage on all saving throws, and the hive mother has advantage on all saving throws.

ENCOUNTER 8: CHAMBER OF DELIGHTS

This encounter has the party fight an advanced deathshrieker named Agony.

SETUP

Allow the characters to place their miniatures at the end of the corridor on the opposite side of the door. Agony is currently standing motionless near the wall and only reacts when it sees when someone or something step within 30 feet of it. When the characters enter this room, read:

You are met with the sight of an eery fog that clouds your vision, reducing visibility to about 30 feet.

Once the characters get within 30 feet of the altar, read:

As you move deeper into the room, you see that the floor is covered by a carpet stained with blood and human remains. At the center of the carpet sits an unholy altar, composed of the same flesh and bones that litters the carpet.

Once Agony enters view of the characters, read:

Soon after taking in this grisly scene, you spy a shape drifting through the fog, a wispy being consisting of a skull perched atop a fluttering knot of ethereal robes. It howls with rage and horror, drifting toward you, eyes blazing with hatred.

TACTICS

Agony moves along the walls of the room, taking advantage of its Incorporeal Movement to remain more than 30 feet from the players at any given time. It starts combat using its *Scream of the Dying* ability, and only makes touch attacks if the target is at 1 hit point or is otherwise an easy target to pick off. Knowing that this room doesn't leave enough room for *Steal Voice* to work well, Agony uses its *Terrifying Glare* each round, and fights until slain.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



ALTAR

The fleshy altar causes the area filled by the carpet to be desecrated. Agony has advantage on all saving throws while it is in the area. A *detect evil and good* spell cast within range reveals its presence.

FOG OF MISERY

The entire room is filled with a magical fog that doesn't affect undead. See Agony's regional effects for more information.

AGONY

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
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6 (-2)	24 (+7)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)
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Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +10, Cha +12

Skills Deception +12, Intimidation +12, Perception +10

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

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities all

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages all

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Aversion to Silence. Agony cannot willingly enter an area of magical silence, and takes 16 (3d10) psychic damage if it starts its turn in one.

Death Rattle. When Agony is reduced to 0 hit points, any non-undead creature within 120 feet of it that can hear its scream must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.

Despair. At the start of each of Agony's turns, each non-undead creature within 120 feet of it that can see or hear it must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage and is incapacitated and can't move until the start of Agony's next turn. On a successful save, a creature is immune to this effect for the next 24 hours. A creature is immune to this effect if it is immune to being frightened.

Incorporeal Movement. Agony can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

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

Share Agony. If Agony takes psychic damage, each non-undead creature within 120 feet of Agony that can hear it takes the same amount of damage. In addition, Agony's thoughts and location can't be discerned by magic.

Actions

Multiattack. Agony makes two touch attacks.

Touch. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 25 (4d8 + 7) necrotic damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage, and the target has disadvantage on all saving throws until the end of Agony's next turn.

Scream of the Dying (Recharge 6). Agony emits a terrible scream. Each non-undead creatures within 60 feet of it that can hear it must make a DC 19 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature drops to 1 hit point. On a successful save, a creature takes 28 (8d6) psychic damage; this damage cannot reduce a creature below 1 hit point.

Legendary Actions

Agony 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. Agony regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Roam. Agony moves up to half its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Steal Voice. Agony magically steals the voice of one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. Until the end of Agony's next turn, the target can no longer speak, and Agony can unerringly speak in its voice instead.

Terrifying Glare (Costs 2 Actions). Agony targets one creature it can see within 120 feet of it. If the target can see Agony, the target must succeed on a DC 19 Charisma saving throw or be magically frightened until the end of Agony's next turn. The frightened target is paralyzed.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region around Agony is filled with a magical fog of misery centered on its space. The radius of this region is 1 mile while Agony is outdoors, but is reduced to 60 feet while indoors. Undead are unaffected by the fog.

The entire area is lightly obscured, and anything more than 30 feet away from a creature within the area is heavily obscured. In addition, sound constantly echoes throughout the fog, making it impossible to discern the location of a creature within it by sound alone.

ENCOUNTER 9: DEMONIC SENTINEL

This encounter has the party face off against a klurichir, one of the most fearsome types of tanar'ri in the Abyss.

SETUP

The **klurichir** (K) is positioned at any of the three starting positions indicated on the map. Unless the characters have some ability to perceive invisible creatures, don't place the demon on the map. Have the players position themselves in the bottom left corner. When this is done, read:

Four alcoves grant access to a larger chamber beyond. A few depressions in the floor hold some foul fluid that bubbles and burps as you watch. In the far corner, blood and gore paint the walls.

If any of the characters can perceive invisible creatures, or if the klurichir's *greater invisibility* spell ends or wasn't cast, read:

A demonic figure stands some 30-feet tall and possesses a powerful and muscular body. Massive crimson wings flare out from its back while four powerful arms twitch and claw at the air. Its head is monstrous and snarling, while a second mouth flanked by grotesque pincers snaps out from its prodigious gut.

TACTICS

Before combat begins, the demon has most likely cast *greater invisibility* on itself. The demon is eager to engage the party in melee, but is clever enough to soften them up first. So, the demon casts *fireball* once the party is close and has bunched up, and spends the next two rounds flying around and casting *fireball* or launching Spine attacks at them. If its invisibility breaks, the klurichir follows up by casting its modified *incendiary cloud* spell and entering melee range.

Once the klurichir has grappled a victim with its Pincers, the klurichir keeps focusing its attacks on its grappled victim until the character escapes or is killed. Once it is reduced to half of its hit points or fewer, it unleashes its

Characters that approach within 30 feet of the demon must save against its Fear Aura. If any characters flee, the klurichir follows, chasing the character or characters so it can butcher them while they scream. The demon does not let the party escape easily. It chases them if they try to flee—even out of the elder evil itself, such is its hunger for fresh meat.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



GLYPHS OF WARDING

Each entrance to this room is protected by a *glyph of warding* with the explosive runes option (spell save DC 15). Created by the klurichir using four spell scrolls, a glyph triggers whenever a creature that isn't the klurichir moves within 5 feet of it. When triggered, each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the glyph must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

POCKMARKS

The floor is dimpled with foul pockmarks that contain the elder evil's ichors. Any creature that enters a space containing the fluid must make a DC 24 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d6 + 8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BLOOD AND GORE

The far corner of this room witnessed the death of another adventuring party who came to destroy the elder evil. The demon captured and slowly tore them to pieces here, tossing their equipment on top of the torn flesh and splattered organs. The items not destroyed by the klurichir are made up of the following list:

- Five *potions of flying* (DMG 187)
- Two *potions of invisibility* (DMG 188)
- One *ring of mind shielding* (DMG 191), which contains the soul of one of the slain adventurers

KLURICHIR

Huge fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 294 (19d12 + 171)
Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	22 (+6)	28 (+9)	21 (+5)	24 (+7)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Str +17, Con +16, Wis +14, Cha +15
Skills Intimidation +15, Perception +21
Damage Resistances cold, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, poisoned, stunned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 31
Languages Abyssal, Common, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 24 (62,000 XP)

Aura of Slaughter. Unless the klurichir is incapacitated, each ally within 120 feet of it can't be charmed or frightened and has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Fear Aura. Any creature hostile to the klurichir that starts its turn within 30 feet of the klurichir must make a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw, unless the klurichir is incapacitated. On a failed save, the creature is frightened until the start of its next turn. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the klurichir's Fear Aura for the next 24 hours.

Innate Spellcasting. The klurichir's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 23). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *blight*, *detect magic*, *fireball*, *telekinesis*
3/day each: *bestow curse* (5th level), *darkness*, *symbol*
2/day each: *counterspell*, *eyebite*, *greater invisibility*
1/day each: *incendiary cloud* (necrotic damage), *power word kill*

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

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

Magic Weapons. The klurichir's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The klurichir makes three attacks: two with its battleaxe and one with its pincers.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d8 + 10) slashing damage. This attack scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on the d20. On a critical hit, the klurichir rolls damage dice three times, instead of twice.

Pincers. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (3d10 + 10) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 20). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and the klurichir can't use its pincers against another target. If the target has at least one head and the klurichir rolled a 20 on the attack roll, the target is decapitated and dies if it can't survive without that head. A target is immune to this effect if it takes none of the damage, has legendary actions, or is Huge or larger. Such a creature takes an extra 6d8 slashing damage from the hit.

Spines. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 90 ft., one or two targets. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 24 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Actions

The klurichir 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. The klurichir regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The klurichir moves up to its speed.

Rend. The klurichir rips the flesh of one creature it is grappling with its pincers. The target takes 36 (4d12 + 10) piercing damage, and it can't regain hit points until the end of the klurichir's next turn.

Blasphemous Utterance (Costs 2 Actions). The klurichir chooses one hostile spell or effect that is currently affecting it. It then targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 23 Charisma saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, the effect ends on the klurichir and is transferred to the target for the remainder of its duration. If the effect is a spell that requires concentration to maintain, the klurichir must concentrate on it, instead of the original caster.

Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). The klurichir casts a spell with a casting time of 1 action.

ENCOUNTER 10: KEEPERS OF THE EYE

This encounter has the party face two deathdrinker demons that serve the will of Tharizdun.

SETUP

Place the deathdrinker demons where indicated on the tactical map. The players may place their miniatures anywhere within the first three squares of the right side of the map. Once the players have placed, read:

Glistening pools of bright green fluid illuminate this chamber and reveal two 30-foot-tall, red-skinned guards dressed in sinister breastplates and wielding massive longswords. Branching out from either side of their heads are broken and splintered antlers. Carved into their foreheads between their white eyes are symbols reminiscent of inverted black pyramids.

TACTICS

While one deathdrinker charges the party from the front, the other uses its Teleport action to position itself behind the party, hopefully within range of its backline members. They then wail on the party with their longswords, hoping to reduce one of them to 0 hit points and to activate their Deathdrink abilities. The deathdrinkers are inherently selfish and do not work together.

DEVELOPMENTS

Sounds of combat from this room may alert nearby creatures. Have the templars of Tharizdun in area 21 make Wisdom (Perception) checks each round the combat continues against a DC of 15 or higher. Similarly, Obox-ob (in area 18) is also entitled to his own Wisdom (Perception) checks. If either Obox-ob or the templars hear the combat, they do not join the fight, but make preparations as noted in their respective entries (if any).

FEATURES OF THE AREA



ACID POOLS

These acid pools are each as deep as they are wide and count as difficult terrain. When a creature moves into the acid's space for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there, it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage and must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

DEATHDRINKER

Huge fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)
Hit Points 253 (22d10 + 132)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	12 (+1)	22 (+6)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +11, Wis +5, Cha +7
Skills Intimidation +7, Perception +5
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Abyssal, Common
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Aura of Unlife. The deathdrinker emits an aura out to a radius of 10 feet. Any non-undead creature in the aura that isn't a deathdrinker can't regain hit points and has disadvantage on death saving throws. At the start of each of the deathdrinker's turns, each non-undead creature in the aura takes 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. Undead in the aura regain the same amount of hit points instead.

Deadly Critical. The deathdrinker scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. On a critical hit, the deathdrinker rolls the damage dice three times, instead of twice, and each ally of the target that can see the deathdrinker must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the deathdrinker until the end of the deathdrinker's next turn.

Deathdrink. When a creature within 30 feet of the deathdrinker is reduced to 0 hit points, the deathdrinker regains 16 hit points, and it gains advantage on all attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws until the end of its next turn.

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

Slaughter (1/Turn). If the deathdrinker makes a weapon attack with advantage on the attack roll and hits a creature with it, the target takes an additional 7 (2d8) necrotic damage. If the target is frightened or incapacitated, the attack also becomes a critical hit.

Unholy Weapons. The deathdrinker's weapon attacks are magical. When the deathdrinker hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 4d8 necrotic damage (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The deathdrinker makes two weapon attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) slashing damage, or 23 (3d10 + 7) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

Teleport. The deathdrinker magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Reactions

Parry. The deathdrinker adds 5 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the deathdrinker must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

ENCOUNTER 11: THE EMISSARY

This encounter has the party face off against Obox-ob, the demon prince of vermin and pests.

SETUP

Place **Obox-ob** (O) where indicated on the tactical map. The players may place their miniatures anywhere near the entrance. When the characters see Obox-ob, read:

A nightmare of spider limbs fused into the form of a vile demon surges outof the darkness, cackling aloud and in your minds to create an unbearable chorus of madness. The form defies description and threatens to blast your sanity away, leaving you a shuddering, gibbering shell.

TACTICS

Once committed to combat, Obox-ob does not grant quarter. He lurches into the fray, seeking to affect as many enemies with his Drone feature as possible. He trains his attacks on any creature that tries to get past him or to engage him directly, using *telekinesis* to toss back ambitious characters, such as those that know about the important items present in the room, back toward the entrance.

If he is reduced to half of his hit points or fewer, or if the characters get their hands on one of the items, Obox-ob uses his Giant Vermin ability to summon two **giant scorpions** (MM 327), directing them to grapple this enemy and to prevent them from escaping. He then becomes less stingy with his spells, unleashing *cloudkill* or *insect plague* on as many enemies as he can.

If at any point in the fight a creature wakes up from being unconscious due to his Drone feature, Obox-ob lurches forward and uses Implant Chaos on them. If Implant Chaos is unavailable, he instead casts *contagion* on the target.



Note that Obox-ob does **not** have access to his lair actions or regional effects during this encounter. They are printed here anyway for the sake of completeness, and to fill in some space that would otherwise be left empty.
If you want to see the original source of this Obox-ob stat block, check out my [Abyssal Horrors](#) document.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Obox-ob can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Obox-ob targets himself or a creature he can see within the lair and magically makes its body do something unnatural, such as vomit blood, twist its head all the way around, or cause a quadruped to move as a biped. Any creature that sees this behavior must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of Obox-ob until initiative count 20 of the next round.
- One repulsive and contaminated feature of the lair releases toxic gas, the decayed remains of a slain creature, a colony of insects, or some other carrier of disease. Each creature within 10 feet of this filth must make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw against disease. On a failed save, the target can't regain hit points until initiative count 20 of the next round.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing Obox-ob's lair is warped by his magic, creating one or more of the following effects:

- The area within 6 miles of the lair becomes overpopulated with giant versions of scorpions, centipedes, and other vermin.
- Any creature that sleeps within 6 miles of the lair must make a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature suffers terrible nightmares and gains no benefit from its rest.

If Obox-ob dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.

OBOX-OB

Huge fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 378 (28d12 + 196)
Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	14 (+2)	25 (+7)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Con +15, Wis +11
Skills History +12, Insight +11, Perception +11
Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, psychic
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21
Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 26 (90,000 XP)

Drone. Obox-ob produces a horrid droning sound to which demons are immune. Any other creature that starts its turn with in 30 feet of Obox-ob must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious for 10 minutes. A creature that can't hear the drone automatically succeeds on the save. The effect on the creature ends if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to splash it with *holy water*.
If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, it is immune to the drone for the next 24 hours.

Innate Spellcasting. Obox-ob's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 23, +15 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *contagion*, *detect magic*, *telekinesis*
2/day each: *cloudkill*, *harm*, *insect plague*
1/day each: *animal shapes* (insects only), *astral projection*

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Obox-ob fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Obox-ob has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Obox-ob's weapon attacks are magical.

Spider Climb. Obox-ob can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. Obox-ob makes four attacks: three with his stingers and one with his tongue. He can use Implant Chaos instead of his tongue.

Stinger. Melee Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Tongue. Melee Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of Obox-ob until the end of the demon lord's next turn.

Implant Chaos (Recharge 5–6). Obox-ob uses his tongue to touch one creature within 15 feet of him that isn't a demon. The target must succeed on a DC 23 Charisma saving throw or have its soul implanted with raw stuff of chaos for 1 minute.

When this effect occurs, the target is poisoned, which causes it to also suffer one level of exhaustion. While poisoned in this way, the target must repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns as the chaos transforms both its body and soul. Three successful saves against the poison end it, and ending the poison removes any levels of exhaustion caused by it. Each failed save causes the target to suffer another level of exhaustion.

If the target dies while implanted with chaos, the chaos completely consumes its body, leaving its equipment behind. If the creature is resurrected by a spell, the caster must succeed on a DC 23 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a failed save, when the target is resurrected, this effect begins to affect the target once again.

Legendary Actions

Obox-ob 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. Obox-ob regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Lurch. Obox-ob moves up to his speed.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) piercing damage.

Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). Obox-ob casts an innate spell.

Giant Vermin (Costs 2 Actions). Obox-ob magically summons twenty **giant centipedes**, ten **giant wasps**, or two **giant scorpions**. The vermin burst out from Obox-ob's body and land in an unoccupied space within 15 feet of the demon lord. The vermin are considered demons rather than beasts, obey Obox-ob's verbal commands, and act on their own initiative count.

ENCOUNTER 12: TEMPLARS OF THARIZDUN

This encounter has the party fight the last surviving cultists of Tharizdun.

SETUP

Lareth the Beautiful (L), an infamous cleric of the Dark God who has escaped death on numerous occasions, positioned his personal guard—the deathdrinkers—at area 17 to dissuade intruders from venturing close to the last cultists' redoubt. If Lareth or his cronies—**Azugel** (A) and **Vadaeth Bloodseeker** (V)—hear the sounds of battle with the demons or Obox-ob (see Encounter 11), they make preparations before combat: Lareth casts *shield of faith*, and Vadaeth casts *staggering smite*. Vadaeth then withdraws into his chambers and emerges only if he hears fighting here.

The placement of the figures assumes the inhabitants are aware of the party. If not, place Azugel and Lareth both in the side rooms. When the party enters this room, read:

Beyond the door, a vast sea of green slime bubbles before you. On either side, you see a few flickering torches, each giving off a pale blue flame. Iron walls set in the strange substance of the walls give the chamber the appearance of having rooms. Charging you is a frothing half-orc wielding a greatsword. At the opposite side of the room, you see a tall blonde man with purple robes. One side of his face is extraordinarily attractive, while the other is a gruesome mass of scars.

Behind the man, you see a massive altar. On it rests an inverted two-step pyramid.

When Vadaeth emerges, read:

A hulking humanoid, larger than a man but smaller than an ogre, lumbers forward. Encased in enameled black full plate and armed with an impossibly large greataxe, he howls "Tharizdun!" as he charges forward.

TACTICS

None of the templars works especially well with the others and each fight independently, looking to kill as many characters as possible while preserving their own skins. Of the three, Azugel is the most straightforward. On the firstround, he charges the closest character, using his Intimidating Presence against them before hacking them into pieces.

Lareth runs through his direct damage spells first, freely catching Azugel in the area. If faced with powerful spells that bring him close to death, he will cast *antimagic field* and run directly into melee, hoping that Azugel and Vadaeth's brute strength will be enough to overpower the party.

If he hasn't already casted *staggering smite*, Vadaeth casts during the first round. He then rushes out of his chambers and into the fray, saving his spell slots for *staggering smite* and *wrathful smite*. He prefers to avoid attacking the same enemy as Azugel. If he is targeted by damaging spells, he will save his reaction for *hellish rebuke*, allowing him to punish the spellcaster for their insolence.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



LIGHT

Positioned around the perimeter of this chamber are magical torches that shed bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light an additional 40 feet.

VIRULENT GREEN SLIME

The center of this chamber is filled with a pool of nasty green slime. This Green Slime is described on page 105 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

AZUGEL

Medium humanoid (half-orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (Unarmored Defense)
Hit Points 253 (22d8 + 154)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	13 (+1)	24 (+7)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +12, Con +12
Skills Athletics +12, Intimidation +7, Perception +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Orc
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals two extra dice of its damage when Azugel hits with it (included in the attack).

Brutish Durability. Whenever Azugel makes a saving throw, he can roll 1d6 and add the die to his saving throw total.

Deadly Critical. Azugel scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 and rolls the damage dice three times, instead of twice.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, Azugel can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls he makes during that turn, but attack rolls against him have advantage until the start of his next turn.

Relentless Rage. If damage reduces Azugel to 0 hit points, he can make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage from a critical hit. On a success, Azugel drops to 1 hit point instead.

Unarmored Defense. While Azugel is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, his AC includes its Constitution modifier.

Unbreakable (3/Day). If Azugel is incapacitated at the start of his turn, the effect causing this condition immediately ends on him.

Actions

Multiattack. Azugel uses his Intimidating Presence, if it is available. He then makes three weapon attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d6 + 7) slashing damage.

Intimidating Presence (Recharge 4–6). Azugel targets one enemy he can see within 30 feet of him. If the target can see and hear him, it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of Azugel until the end of Azugel's next turn. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target also experiences a random form of short-term madness for the same duration, determined by rolling on the Short-Term Madness table in chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Reactions

Unbridled Fury. In response to being hit by a melee attack, Azugel can make one melee weapon attack with advantage against the attacker.

Legendary Actions

Azugel can take 1 legendary action, 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. Azugel regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Savage. Azugel makes one weapon attack against each creature within 5 feet of him.

Shake it Off. One spell or effect of Azugel's choice immediately ends on himself.

LARETH THE BEAUTIFUL

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)
Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +11, Cha +9
Skills Arcana +6, Deception +9, Intimidation +15, Religion +6
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Abyssal, Common
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Commander of Evil. Lareth can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that he can see within 30 feet of him makes an attack roll or a saving throw (no reaction required). The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand Lareth. This trait doesn't function while Lareth is incapacitated.

Disgusting Visage. Creatures that can see Lareth have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Hand of Devastation. Whenever Lareth rolls damage for a spell, he can reroll the spell's damage dice and use either total.

Spellcasting. Lareth is a 20th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 19). Lareth has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): light, resistance, sacred flame, spare the dying, thaumaturgy
1st level (4 slots): detect evil and good, inflict wounds, shield of faith, wrathful smite
2nd level (3 slots): blindness/deafness, invisibility, lesser restoration
3rd level (3 slots): fireball, lightning bolt, spirit guardians
4th level (3 slots): guardian of faith, ice storm, staggering smite
5th level (3 slots): cloudkill, destructive wave
6th level (2 slots): blade barrier, harm
7th level (2 slots): divine word, fire storm
8th level (1 slot): antimagic field
9th level (1 slot): power word kill

Actions

Mace. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

Reactions

Blessing of Tharizdun. When Lareth takes damage, he can use his reaction to force each hostile creature within 10 feet of him to make a DC 19 Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes half the damage Lareth took as psychic damage.

Unholy Protection. Lareth halves the damage that he takes from an attack, spell, or other effect.

Legendary Actions

Lareth can take 1 legendary action, 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. Lareth regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Cast a Spell. Lareth casts a non-damaging spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or lower.

Terrifying Glare. Lareth targets one creature he can see within 30 feet of him. If the target can see Lareth, it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or be magically frightened until the end of Lareth's next turn. The frightened target is paralyzed.

VADAETH BLOODSEEKER

Medium humanoid (goliath), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)
Hit Points 190 (20d8 + 100)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +10, Dex +6, Con +10, Int +6, Wis +7, Cha +10
Skills Athletics +10, Insight +7, Investigation +6, Religion +6
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Abyssal, Common, Giant, Terran
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Aura of Slaughter. Unless Vadaeth is incapacitated, each ally within 30 feet of him can't be charmed or frightened and has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Dark Blessing. Vadaeth adds his Charisma modifier to his saving throws and to the damage he deals with melee weapon attacks (accounted for in his statistics).

Powerful Blows. When Vadaeth hits a Medium or smaller creature or object with a melee weapon attack, the target must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is pushed up to 5 feet away from Vadaeth and is knocked prone.

Shroud of Evil. Vadaeth is immune to any spell or effect that would read his thoughts, determine if he is lying, or magically influence his thoughts or behavior, unless the spell or effect comes from Tharizdun.

Spellcasting. Vadaeth is a 20th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18). Vadaeth has the following spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *bane*, *command*, *hellish rebuke*, *wrathful smite*
2nd level (3 slots): *darkness*, *enlarge/reduce*, *shatter*
3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse*, *dispel magic*, *fear*
4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *phantasmal killer*, *staggering smite*
5th level (2 slots): *destructive wave*, *dispel evil and good*

Unholy Vigor. As a bonus action, Vadaeth can gain 15 temporary hit points.

Actions

Multiattack. Vadaeth makes two weapon attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (1d12 + 10) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Reactions

Stone's Endurance. Vadaeth halves the damage that he takes from an attack that hits him. Vadaeth must be able to see the attacker.

Unyielding. When Vadaeth is subjected to an effect that would move him, knock him prone, or both, he can use his reaction to be neither moved nor knocked prone.

Legendary Actions

Vadaeth can take 1 legendary action, 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. Vadaeth regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Crush. Vadaeth initiates a grapple contest with one prone humanoid within his reach. On a success, the target takes 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage as Vadaeth uses his foot to crush the target's chest. While Vadaeth keeps his foot on the target, the target is grappled and restrained, and it is suffocating. The target can uses its action to repeat the contest, freeing itself on a success. Vadaeth doesn't need a free hand to initiate this grapple, but he can only grapple one creature at a time with this ability.

Vile Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target suffers disadvantage on all saving throws until the end of Vadaeth's next turn.

ENCOUNTER 13: ESSENCE OF SHOTHRAGOT

This encounter is the final fight against the Essence of Shothragot.

SETUP

The player characters appear on the ledge surrounding the essence's pit. The players may place their miniatures anywhere inside the dotted red box. Place the **blackstone giants** where indicated and the **essence of Shothragot** (page 4) at the bottom of the pit. Neither the constructs nor the elder evil anticipate the party's arrival, so the characters automatically gain surprise. When the characters appear, read:

You find yourself in a massive chamber with smooth black stone walls and floor. The ceiling stretches nearly 100 feet overhead. Hovering in each corner of the room are four 66-foot-tall black statues of horrible demons, fusions of snakes and beautiful women. Each wears a necklace of petrified human heads whose faces are contorted as if wailing. The statues, as one, turn their stony heads to face you, faces twisting with anger.

TACTICS

After the initial surprise, the blackstone giants sweep in to grab as many of the characters as they can and to drop them into the pit, causing them to fall 60 feet and to land on the essence's body.

The giants concentrate their attacks against the more melee inclined members of the party, leaving the spellcasters and ranged characters to contend with the elder evil. Ideally, they plan to petrify these melee characters and to pit them against the rest of the party using Animate Statue.

The essence ascends from the pit on the second round and stops about 10 feet over the top of it. It starts off by using Discord and Woe against a spellcaster in the party, following up with its various offensive spells and melee attacks. Once it is reduced to half of its hit points or fewer, the essence begins using spells like *earthquake* more freely, even if doing so would harm the giants. If a party member manages to deal significant harm to the essence in melee, it uses its Fling ability to splatter it against the wall or against the bottom of the pit.

THE VARAKHUT

If the varakhut in area 6 is also present, it will focus its ire on the blackstone giants. The varakhut does so because it believes the party has a better chance of beating it, and also because it wouldn't be fun for your players if it stole their spotlight against the final boss. That said, the varakhut may be willing to cooperate with any plans the party might have if it believes they are well thought out and have a decent chance of success. Know that the varakhut will make every effort to ensure the elder evil is defeated, even if this means it will not survive this battle.

As the giants' petrification abilities are magical and thus can be countered by the varakhut's Antimagic Cone, and because the varakhut is immune to being petrified, the varakhut is a natural counter to the giants. The varakhut draws fire from at least two of the giants, aiming its Antimagic Cone up at their heads to avoid interfering with the party's fight against the essence. If any of the other giants are giving the party a hard time, the varakhut might unleash its Force Blast against them when possible.

CONCLUSION

Once the party destroys the essence of Shothragot, the surviving blackstone giants wail in horror as they crumble to dust. Rents appear in the walls tearing through the elder evil's body and giving the party an avenue of escape. If the characters don't move quickly, the walls contract, shrinking by 1 foot every round until the elder evil implodes. Any creatures inside are utterly destroyed.

FEATURES OF THE AREA



PIT

The pit is 60 feet deep. Characters falling in the pit take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage.

CRACKED FLOOR

Squares containing cracks and fissures count as difficult terrain.

BLACKSTONE GIGANT

Gargantuan construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 231 (14d20 + 84)
Speed 40 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	9 (-1)	22 (+6)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages the languages of its creator
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Immutable Form. The giant is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

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

Magic Weapons. The giant's weapon attacks are magical.

Trampling Charge. If the giant moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a slam attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the giant can make one slam attack against it as a bonus action.

Actions

Multiattack. The giant makes three slam attacks, each of which it can replace with one use of Petrifying Grasp, or with Animate Statue if it is available.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Petrifying Grasp. The giant attempts to grapple one creature within 5 feet of it. The giant has eight arms, each of which can grapple one target. On a success, the giant can attempt to magically petrify the grappled target. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and it must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If it successfully saves against this effect three times, it is immune to it for the next 24 hours. If it fails its saves three times, it is turned to stone and is petrified until the creature is freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic. The successes and failures don't need to be consecutive; keep track of both until the target collects three of a kind, or until the grapple ends.

Animate Statue (Recharge 6). The giant touches one petrified creature within 5 feet of it and magically animates its body. This effect lasts for 1 minute, until the giant or the target dies, or until the target is no longer petrified. While its body is animated, it uses the statistics of a **stone cursed** (MTF 240). It also gains 50 temporary hit points and an additional +4 bonus to its attack and damage rolls. The animated body defends the giant to the best of its ability.