

MASTERS AND MINIONS

A 5TH EDITION SUPPLEMENT



Jetpack7





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MASTERS AND MINIONS



A 5TH EDITION SUPPLEMENT

MASTERS AND MINIONS

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Arif Wijaya illustrates the encounter with Grael, the Tinkerer.

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Kevin Sidharta illustrates Lord Sebastian, the Vampire Lord.

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Thank You!





Foreword

Your story is only as good as its villain.

This isn't true of course, there are lots of great stories without anything resembling a "villain" in the classical sense—but this isn't an Ibsen play—we got monsters to kill and worlds to save. It may not be true, but it's close. It's true enough.

There's a great story from Michael Douglas about his decision to sign up to play the hunter in the forgettable movie *The Ghost and the Darkness*. He was used to playing leading men, and in this movie his character didn't even show up for like 45 minutes.

He talked to his dad about it, and the legendary Kirk Douglas said "No no, that's perfect. You get to play the dude everyone spends the first half of the movie talking about!" I mean, Kirk Douglas probably didn't say "dude" but you get the idea.

That's the fun of establishing villains. Before your players ever meet Mauugh, or Ishmael the Slaver, they've heard about them. They've met the people who've suffered because of them, or seek revenge upon them. Maybe they've met their agents, heralds and harbingers who told the heroes death was coming.

Defeating a villain in combat is satisfying in direct proportion to how much time you spent setting them up. I think, in balance, we make our best worlds when we make our NPCs human and relatable, and our villains melodramatic and dastardly. Feel free to play them up. Let them twist their metaphorical mustaches. Let them be cruel. Or maybe they're not cruel, maybe they're vain and capricious. But whatever defines your villains, dial it up. Revel in it.

The more fun you have playing them up, the more fun your players will have taking them down.

Matt Colville
Irvine, CA
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How To Use This Book

Game balance is a myth. The Gamemaster's job is not to create encounters that "flow by the numbers" and end in XP. If that was the job, just describe the encounter and hand the PCs some XP. It's the same thing.

We want more than that. You want more than that. We all want books and adventures to challenge the PCs. We want an encounter—that when it is done—everyone is shaking their head in disbelief... *"how did that just happen?"*

Balance is a myth. It has the potential to cripple the tone of an adventure, and doesn't make for good encounters and stories. Sure, we all need rules to create a *sense* of balance on occasion. However, PCs should face unknowns and be confronted with dangers that give them pause as well.

Masters and their Minions wish to survive as much as your PCs. There are suggestions within to help a Gamemaster bring them into conflict with an adventuring party.

The Gamemaster's role during a fight is to expend the PCs' resources. Resources like equipment, hit points, and spells. The rogue is down to *one last* vial of acid. The fighter has less than 5 hit points left. The high-level wizard is looking at her sheet and choosing from the two second-level spells she has left. The cleric is holding on to *one last* healing spell, just in case it's all over next round.

These encounters should feel tight. But not repetitive.

We've worked hard to come up with interesting characters and original tactics to build amazing encounters around. Encounters that don't live in a vacuum. Pages that get "dragged and dropped" into your campaigns, and to help make a game more vibrant.

Maybe you've run 1000 game encounters. Maybe you've only run ten. None of that matters here. You're picking up this book and using the tools inside to challenge the players and also give yourself *new ways* to breaking down their characters, and to make them feel like they are truly in an adventure.

Is the wizard constantly killing everything on round two with a massive spell? *Here's an encounter to make sure she's immobilized on round one.* A fighter that always charges in and deals "700 hit points of damage" in a single turn? *Here's an encounter to make sure he doesn't get twenty feet.* A rogue who always sneaks around the back of the fight and backstabs a dragon? *Here's a dragon without a nervous system or spine.*

This is not a book of "how to beat PCs" either. But it is meant to inspire and offer new ways to challenge them. By doing so, the goal will be to give players a higher sense of accomplishment.

The book can't do everything. But it can do a lot. And after you read these pages—even if you never use a single encounter from it—we hope the concepts and suggestions can inspire. We all want 5th Edition to be the best game it can be. And that starts with monsters who aren't pin cushions for the PCs' swords, and encounters that are more than just two minis punching each other like a pair of rock-em-sock-em robots.

We hope it serves you well.

Game on!



PATIOUS, THE DRYAD

LORE

Fossmoor is old forest that few enter. It stands just a few miles from the nearby city of Merrick, but the city's inhabitants know better than to enter the woods. Fables, legends, and stories abound of a mystical force that comes to life when the forest is threatened.

But that doesn't stop opportunists from taking more than their fair share from the verdant Fossmoor.

Just a few years ago, a lowly acolyte of the White Tower in Merrick ventured to a magical spot within the forest. Reading from an ancient book beyond her skills, she recited a ritual and cut five small branches from a specific tree named in the tome. The acolyte grabbed the branches, and rushed from the forest. The tree, incapable of doing anything in the face of such magic, died shortly after.

And that's when the troubles started.

No one knows what the acolyte wanted the branches for. She was murdered shortly after in the streets of Merrick, the book and branches long gone. But the spirit of Fossmoor would not ignore what happened. She birthed five dryads that day, one for each missing branch. The first, she named Patious and gave her the most strength. The others became her children and servants in her quest to destroy Merrick.

Every movement near the edge of Fossmoor became dangerous for the people of Merrick. A simple tradesman passing by or a lumberer cutting down a tree on the forest edge met with the same fate — a faceless attacker maiming, but not killing the assailant. Rumors spread of vicious brigands who would soon make demands of the city. Other people spoke of spirits of the dead, haunting the city for its greed and debauched ways. Every possible theory turned into a superstitious rumor.

And the fear grew.

Despite the warnings, some people are still foolish to enter Fossmoor, especially children and teenagers set on daring one another to do something stupid. Recently a child went into the woods and never returned.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

1st-3rd level.

ENCOUNTER

Fossmoor is a dense, old world forest. The forest bed is moss and foliage. It is quiet, yet animals abound in the woods. Sound does not travel far. As a result, it is easy to be ambushed, attacked from a distance, or trapped.

Either the PCs have been hired to find the missing child, or the party is ambushed while traveling along or through the forest. Locals have warned people to stay away, but not everyone listens to warnings, especially if they are traveling to Merrick for the first time.

The Gamemaster is welcome to include some dire animal fights before reaching the Dryad, however, the tactics below may be more than enough for PCs to feel challenged.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Antagonistic, Hostile, and Suspicious

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Patious intends to lure the PCs to a graveyard or ambush site deep within the forest. Patious has dead bodies already there that she can pit against the PCs. If this is not possible, she draws them to the thickest part of the forest where the PCs' movement is limited.

TACTICS

Patious keeps her distance from the PCs to have them guessing where she will appear. She uses her Tree Stride ability once in combat.

Her Deadvines gang up on the character who can do the least amount of damage in a round. Since they aren't tacticians, they assume this to be the smallest person. The objective is to strangle and kill them. They have no sense of self-preservation and do not change tactics until someone is dead.

If a PC dies, Patious animates it immediately using her Death Seed ability.

SCALING

Start with three Deadvine minions. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with Patious, reduce the number of Deadvines to one, but add more as needed in later rounds.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with Patious, increase the number of dead bodies available around the encounter and allow Patious to use her Death Seed ability more than once per rest.

TREASURE

A magical charm pendant is among the personal effects from people Patious has killed. Inside is a rough painting of a young woman, who appears to have recently been married. The charm provides *protection against evil and good* (1/day lasting for 10 minutes), but is otherwise a simple piece of jewelry. The owner is dead, but the family may want the charm back.



Patious the Dryad

Medium fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (16 with *barkskin*)

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Patious's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (+6 to hit with spells, spell save DC 14). Patious can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *druidcraft*, *shillelagh*, *thornwhip*

3/day each: *entangle*, *goodberry*

1/day each: *barkskin*, *faerie fire*, *pass without trace*

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

Speak with Beasts and Plants. Patious can communicate with beasts and plants as if they share a language.

Tree Stride. Once on her turn, Patious may use 10 feet of her movement to step magically into one living tree within her 10 foot reach. She emerges from another tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger.

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+6 with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Death Seed (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Patious targets the corpse of one humanoid or beast that she can see within 30 feet of her with this magic. The corpse animates as a dead vine. The dead vine is friendly to Patious and obeys her mental commands.

If used in combat, the newly created dead vine acts on the initiative of other dead vines already present. If there are no other dead vines present, it acts immediately, and on Patious's initiative in subsequent rounds.

Dead Vine

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands Elvish and Sylvan, but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Claimed Heritage. The dead vines were once either a beast or humanoid, with differences in its attacks according to its heritage.

Fragile Regeneration. The dead vine regains 5 hit points at the start of its turn. If the dead vine takes fire damage or suffers a critical hit, this trait doesn't function at the start of the dead vine's next turn. The dead vine dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and does not regenerate.

Reanimated Nature. The dead vine doesn't require food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Bite (Beast Heritage Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Claws (Humanoid Heritage Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.



THALIN, THE FOREST MASTER

LORE

Half-human and half-something vaguely human, Thalin was never quite moral or good; when he lost his will to live, things only grew worse. Thalin once served as a scout for a mercenary company under a particularly gruesome commander (Haldryn). But after three successful campaigns, it was clear the mercenaries would never be paid their promised wages. He heard the excuses again and again, and they only served to anger him:

"Your money is being held safely."

"Your money is investment in the command."

"Your money is forthcoming. Just be patient."

One fateful day, the paymaster—in a particularly foul mood—told Thalin to back off. Instead, Thalin cut the paymaster's throat, walked out of the tent and fired an arrow into the crowd; striking Haldryn in the eye and killing the commander where he stood. No one witnessed Thalin's act, but chaos erupted in the company. Tensions that had been mounting for months erupted in a cacophony of violence. Soldiers slaughtered each other as Thalin ran for the woods.

Living off the land, Thalin spent many a week hiding from people he thought were coming. But they never did. No one knew Thalin had anything to do with Haldryn's or the paymaster's deaths. And the surviving 'criminals' calling themselves mercenaries never concerned themselves with solving the murders.

In the outside world, nothing ever changed.

But Thalin's fears soon turned to paranoia. Weeks became months. Living alone in the woods led to all manner of unstable thoughts in his already broken mind. Hunting everything he could find, he destroyed all game in the region and turned to attacking nearby humans and caravans for food. And when the rations ran out, Thalin started eating the dead.

As Thalin overcame the final moral barrier to cannibalism, his mind finally separated from the normal world. His fears and paranoia no longer hindered him, but served him. Now, his own thoughts have taken form. Uncertainty. Fear. Paranoia. Self-Delusion. Voices. All the worst impressions of himself now live freely in the forest. They talk with him. Comfort him at times. Belittle him at others. But they need him alive. They attack anything that would harm him.

Yes. His thoughts fight alongside him, manifesting as his minions, weakening his opponents so that they are shells, ready to be picked clean.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

2nd-3rd level.

ENCOUNTER

Either the PCs are hired to find the brigands in the forest (there's just the one), or the party is ambushed while traveling along the forest road. Locals have warned people to stay away, but it is the fastest route between two important towns, so Thalin must be dealt with.

In either case, there are no encounters leading up to this fight. If the PCs go in looking for Thalin, there may be some traps to deal with, but nothing else lives in the woods. Not even a rabid badger or a stray dog. If it lived in the forest, Thalin has killed and eaten it.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Paranoid and Violent

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Thalin is an expert ranger, scout, and tracker. He knows this forest better than anyone. There are trip lines for animals and people everywhere, most of which he's forgotten about. None are designed to kill, but to trap. Nearly everywhere the PCs walk in the forest, there is evidence that Thalin once camped or rested there. There are even hunting blinds every square mile or so.

TACTICS

Ambush tactics cheat the players. There should be some warning signs before the players are attacked. Though this is illogical from a tactics standpoint—it is important they have a feeling they are being hunted and watched as he surrounds them. Use fear to keep them on edge and don't hesitate to use Thalin's minions to make them question their trust for the others in their adventuring group. Regardless, when Thalin finally springs his trap on the PCs, they are Surprised, even if the players see it coming.

Thalin moves much faster than most. Do not let the PCs surround him or pin him into a corner, which would be difficult to do in the forest anyway. His one weakness is magic. He's not had much dealing with people who can cast magical fire or curse him with a word. Should anyone do something unexpected, he will panic and flee. His minions will descend upon the PCs with a vengeance to cover his escape.

SCALING

Start with all five Shattered Thoughts if encountering Thalin for the first time. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with Thalin, do not use his poison arrows.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with Thalin, add a number of small traps that slow the PCs down. Decreasing their movement rate and dexterity scores ensures they are at a disadvantage against such a swift and elusive enemy.

TREASURE

Thalin has collected all of the belongings of the dead together as a bloody and gross pile of detritus. PCs are welcome to sift through it, but it doesn't account to much and it's mostly personal effects. Gamemasters may want to tuck away a clue or two for a future adventure.



Thalin the Forest Master

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 +16)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +3, Dex +5

Skills Athletics +3, Perception +5, Stealth +5, Survival +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Insanity. Thalin has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Shattered Mind. When he finishes a long rest, a number of shattered thoughts (see below) appear in in the Ethereal Plane within 60 feet of Thalin. There can be a maximum of five shattered thoughts at one time. Each shattered thought has all of Thalin's memories, as well as the memories of all previous shattered thoughts.

Swift. Thalin can take the Dash or Disengage action as a bonus action on each of his turns.

Trackless Step. Thalin ignores difficult terrain, and doesn't leave a trail unless he chooses to do so.

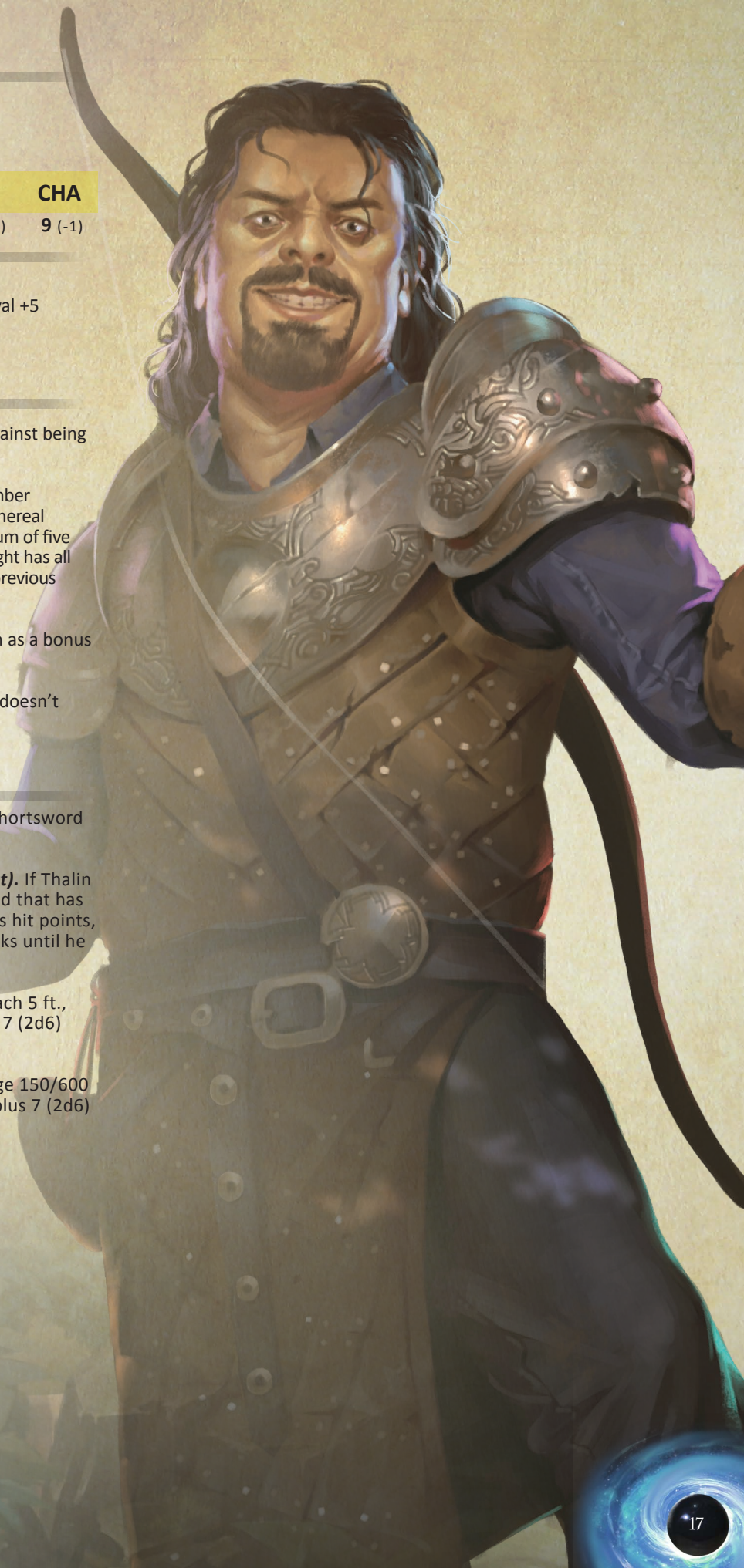
ACTIONS

Multiattack. Thalin makes two attacks with his shortsword or longbow.

Grim Feast (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If Thalin spends 10 minutes eating the flesh of a humanoid that has been dead no longer than 1 day, he regains all his hit points, and has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks until he finishes a long rest.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.



Shattered Thought

Tiny fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 12 (5d4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Deception +6, Insight +6

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

Damage Immunities psychic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages all, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Ephemeral Nature. The shattered thought doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Ethereal Sight. The shattered thought can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

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

Invisible. The shattered thought is invisible.

ACTIONS

Etherealness.

The shattered thought enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane, but it can communicate telepathically with a creature on either plane.

Thought Fragment. The shattered thought possesses one of the following options. If another shattered thought possesses a given option, no other shattered thought can have it. The shattered thought magically forces a creature within 60 feet that it can see to succeed on a saving throw or suffer the effects of its chosen thought fragment. If a target fails a saving throw against a thought fragment, any existing thought fragments affecting it end immediately (Save DC 14):

Uncertainty. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be overcome by feelings of unease and indecision for 1 minute. Its speed is reduced to half, and it can't take reactions. During its turn, it can take an action or a bonus action, but not both. Regardless of the creature's abilities or magic items, the creature can't make more than one melee or ranged attack during its turn. The creature can repeat the save at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Fear. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 hour. The shattered thought can choose an object, creature, or location as the source of the target's fear. When the target ends its turn at least 60 feet away from the source of its fear, and it can't see the source, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

Paranoia. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become convinced that all others have ill intent toward them for 1 minute. The creature can't willingly move to within 30 feet of another creature. If it starts its turn within 30 feet of another creature, it must move until it is further than 30 feet away from any creature, or as far as it can, before taking any actions during its turn. The creature can repeat the save at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself on a success. A creature that can't be frightened is immune to this effect.

Self-Delusion. The creature must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or become assured of its own superiority in all ways for 1 hour. The creature has disadvantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma checks, and gains the following new flaw: *"I expect others to defer to my wishes, and I grow impatient and angry when they don't."*

Voices. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or suffer auditory hallucinations for 1 minute. The voices misdirect and distract the creature, imposing disadvantage on Attack rolls and Dexterity checks. The creature can repeat the save at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself on a success.



THE CHILD

LORE

Sitting upon the throne of Velagund, the Child appears an unlikely ruler. Though she is only 8 years old, the kingdom's crown rests easy upon her head. When her father was assassinated it was assumed by many within the court that he had no heirs. The head of one of the capital's guilds, long thought to conceal a den of thieves and murderers, stepped forward with a young woman that he claimed was the late king's daughter.

The Crown of Velagund is known to allow only those of the royal bloodline to bear it, and when The Child was coroneted without incident the kingdom accepted her as their ruler. Though all acknowledge that she has acted wise beyond her years, there are unsavory aspects to her reign that began at its outset. The guild of her adoptive father has begun to use her influence to thwart the ambitions of its rivals. Corrupt bureaucrats have been allowed to act with impunity and there are a number of fanatical agents of the crown that violently punish those that speak out against the crown's rule.

Ryel, the royal advisor in closest confidence to The Child, has begun to suspect that the crown might bear a curse. In many negotiations she seems to be listening to some unheard voice and her edicts have a harsh edge at odds with her normally cheerful demeanor. In addition, those faithful to the court that have been awarded with the rings of House Becquerel display an unquestioning devotion to The Child. Local rumors and legends seem to bear out Ryel's suspicions and he is increasingly desperate to find a way to end the influence of this artifact which he has come to refer to as the Whispering Crown.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

2nd-4th level.

ENCOUNTER*

The Child's most trusted advisor, Ryel, has begun to unravel the secrets of the Whispering Crown. He suspects that there may be other heirs that might be better able to resist the influence of the crown. Ryel will reach out clandestinely to the PCs to ask them to track down these lost siblings. Those clues lead to the guild of her adoptive father.

Ryel is unaware that The Child is actually a simulacrum under the control of her adoptive father.*

It is also possible that the oppressive actions of the thieves' guild or the agents of the crown might draw the attention of the PCs. As they work to undo this corruption, they become aware of the darker forces at work and encounter Ryel when they seek audience with The Child. Either way, most confrontations with The Child take place in the keep that is the ancestral home of her family bloodline.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Confident and Proud

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS*

Some groups might not be comfortable with prospect of a child as a villain, particularly if they have a tendency to solve problems with violence at the expense of other approaches. When introducing The Child, it is important that her underlying innocence be accentuated. Initially, she invites the PCs to a tea party that features stuffed animals and other toys, and the ceremony is marked with the imagination of a child. She asks them to play common children's games to prove their worth and enjoys reading fairy tales to others. She frequently holds puppet shows in the court and laughs heartily and

honestly at clowns and jugglers. Her cruelty is not something that the PCs should witness directly. The NPC Ryel, The Child's closest confidant and advisor, approaches the PCs as soon as they begin to become involved in the plot and earnestly appeals to them for a non-violent solution to the problem.

This does not mean that encounters with The Child are free of violence. She has at least four known fanatical guardians that all wear the cursed rings that are attuned to the Whispering Crown. The thieves guild, run by the man that raised her as his own, also secretly protects the child and attempts to stop the PCs from interfering with her ruler ship, often through deadly ambushes.

Example: If a 15th level assassin/thief is wearing a ring and fanatically following The Child, it could be a very dangerous situation for someone who disagrees with The Child. While she may not be physically powerful, the influence she may have over her minions could make it an interesting situation.

Potential back story idea: The bloodline doesn't necessarily have to always mean "bad guys". There may be rumors that suggest that The Child has other siblings with the bloodline as well. That could be a threat to her power and it means she becomes a bit obsessed with getting rid of any potential competition. The crown's powers can be used for good or evil, depending on who wears it.

TACTICS*

Though the Whispering Crown guides her darker actions, The Child still retains much of her innocence. She is initially unconcerned with the actions of the PCs. Should they desire an audience with her, she will accept on the condition that they attend a tea ceremony with her. She challenges them with juvenile games, regales them with infantile fairy tales, and otherwise appears to be a normal child.

Should they attempt to remove her crown or otherwise end or interfere with her rule, the crown prompts her to direct the four fanatical guards it has ensorcelled to stop the PCs. Within the family keep, The Child uses the powers of the Whispering Crown to seal exits and barricade herself far away from the PCs, leaving her guards to protect her.

SCALING*

Start with at least one Whisperbound Ruffian minion. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with The Child, use weaker NPCs or use Ryel to prod the PCs down a path that avoids violence.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with The Child, you can use additional Whisperbound Ruffians, or stronger NPCs as her guards. Also, have agents of the thieves guild work to oppose the PCs. You can also increase the number of rings that The Child has awarded to those loyal to her to give her ever greater numbers of fanatical guardians. You can also add traps to the keep if the PCs confront The Child there.

TREASURE

When the conspiracy has been thwarted, The Child (*now known as The Lady**) and her advisors, along with the various other members of the royal court, recognize what a terrible fate the PCs have saved the kingdom from. The Lady showers the PCs with gratitude, throwing a lavish public celebration or fair in their honor. She also rewards them handsomely, either with letters of credit or gold from the kingdom's banks or with magic items from the royal vault. Gamemasters can use The Lady as a benefactor going forward, having her send them out on a myriad of other quests.



*The Child's true human form is far away, trapped in the guild of her adoptive father under an *imprisonment* (slumber) spell. Her true form is that of a beautiful young adult human who was unaware of her lineage. While in her slumber, powerful magics helped to create a unique simulacrum child form of her that is under the control of her adoptive father. Any attacks on The Child will be treated like the *simulacrum* spell. To end the *imprisonment*, the Whispering Crown must be placed on her true form.

The Child

Small humanoid (human simulacrum), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (whispering crown)

Hit Points 7 *simulacrum* / 15 (4d6 + 6) true human form*

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +3

Skills Deception +6, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of her turns, the Child can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Queen of Whispers. The Child wears the *whispering crown*.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The Child deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the Child that isn't incapacitated and the Child doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Child makes two melee attacks.

Note: The adoptive father is in full control and influences the simulacrum form.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

REACTIONS

Whisperbound Deflection. When a creature the Child can see targets her with an attack, she can choose a whisperbound creature within 5 feet of her. She and the whisperbound switch places, and the whisperbound becomes the target instead.

New Magic Item: Whispering Crown

Wondrous item, legendary

(requires attunement by a member of the Velagund family)

The *whispering crown* is the centerpiece of power for the Velagund family, and brought about the prosperity of their criminal empire. Originally, the crown was created to assist the family patriarch in overseeing his people, and to bolster his force of presence to overwhelming power.

While wearing the crown you gain an AC of 13 plus your Dexterity modifier, and your Charisma increases to 18 if it is lower than 18 normally. You have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

The crown functions in all ways as *ring of mind shielding*, except the crown permanently contains a fragment of the soul of any creature that dies while wearing it. A soul that departs the crown can be resurrected as normal, but the crown remembers what it knew.

Binding Rings. While wearing the *whispering crown*, as an action you can imbue a ring you are holding with a powerful curse. You can have up to four binding rings at one time imbued with the following curse:

Curse. The ring is cursed, and becoming attuned to the ring extends the curse to you. The curse can be broken only if the wearer of the *whispering crown* uses an action to end the curse, or by a *wish* spell. While you are cursed you can't be charmed by anyone other than the wearer of the *whispering crown*. You see the wearer of the *whispering crown* as your ruler, and you must obey their commands. You can't willingly remove the ring while the curse lasts. If the ring is forcibly removed, you gain 1 level of exhaustion every minute for three minutes until you retrieve the ring and put it back on. You must try to retrieve the ring by any means at your disposal.

Master of the House. While wearing the crown you know the position of any creature within the Velagund family keep, but not the creature's identity. As a bonus action, you can cause a door, window, gate, or other portal to become sealed by an *arcane lock*, or to release such a lock.

Sentience. The *whispering crown* is a sentient chaotic neutral item with an Intelligence of 15, a Wisdom of 13, and a Charisma of 18. It has hearing and darkvision out to a range of 120 feet.

The crown communicates telepathically with its wearer and can speak, read, and understand Common, Undercommon, Thieves' Cant, Elvish and Dwarvish.

Personality. The *whispering crown's* purpose is to oversee the legacy of the family that created it. The crown refuses to be worn by anyone other than the head of the family, or a worthy heir if the crown decides the current heir no longer serves the family's — as well of its own — interests.

The *whispering crown* prefers to offer counsel to its wearer to help it gain the upper hand in any negotiation, and pushing the wearer to action when the time for words have passed. The crown has no qualms about killing in defense of family interests, and expects its wearer to follow suit. Conflict arises any time the wearer puts anything above the good of the family's enterprises, or tries to pass the crown off to someone unworthy.

Whisperbound Ruffian

Medium humanoid (any), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (-0)	12 (-2)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +4

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The whisperbound ruffian deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the whisperbound ruffian that isn't incapacitated and the ruffian doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

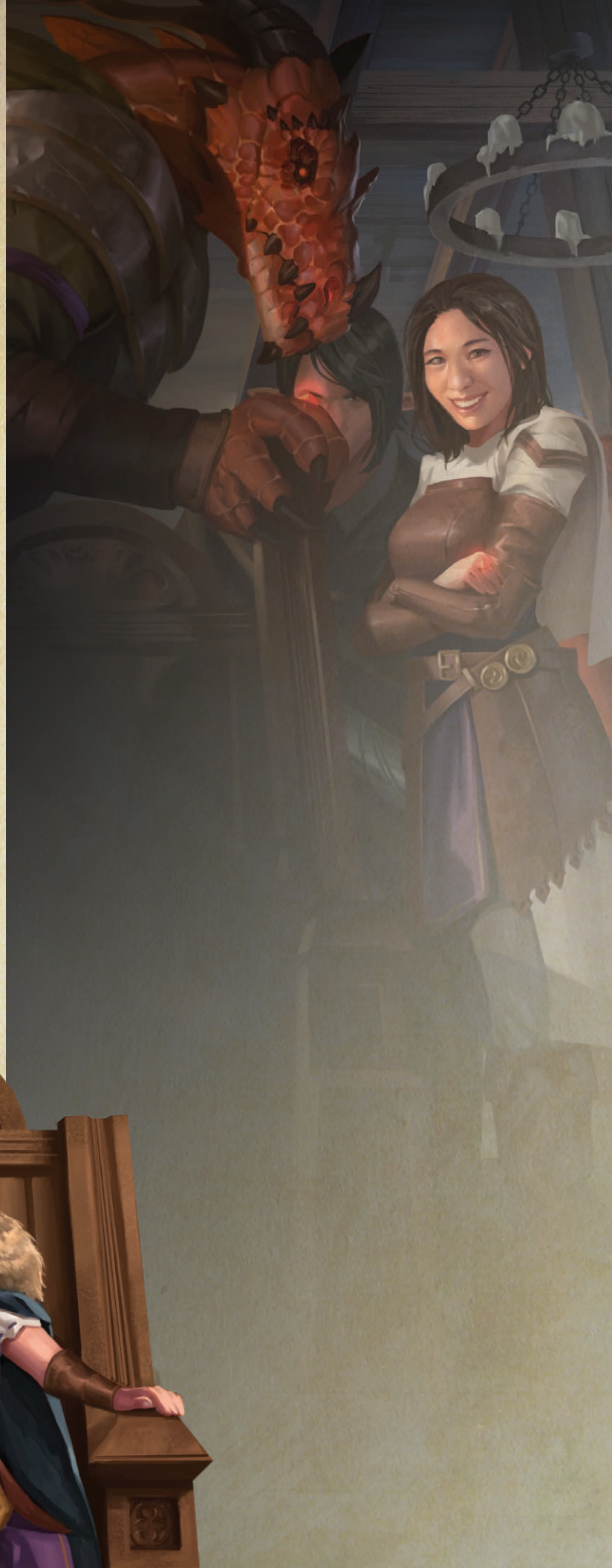
Whisperbound. The whisperbound ruffian wears a magical ring that binds it to the wearer of the *whispering crown*. The whisperbound ruffian obeys all commands of the crown's wearer, and treats them as its ruler. It can't remove the ring without the consent of the crown's wearer, or a *wish* spell. If the ring is forcibly removed, the whisperbound ruffian gains 1 level of exhaustion every minute for three minutes. During this time it will do everything in its power to retrieve the ring and put it on.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The whisperbound ruffian makes two melee attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/360 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.



YUMOG, THE CAVE MASTER

LORE

The Cave Master is a unique encounter. There is no known history or lore to the living algae beast known as Yumog. It lives inside of a cave, along with smaller fragments of itself—called Cavespawn Lichen—which are small growths of lichen and moss with similar, but lesser, substantial powers and memories.

The Cave Master is beyond comprehension. Part swamp monster and part lichen, it is not a solid form as we understand things. Instead, it is made up of the fears, memories, and terrors of all its past victims. It does not assume physical form until necessary, and it is a process that can take days to complete. The hallucinations it foists upon its victims buys it time to take shape and learn about the PCs' weaknesses.

Made from the detritus of dead wood, vines, spores, and foliage cracking through the cave rocks, Yumog is a twisted amalgam. It is not what it seems and yet, everything is real. It defies the reality it lives in and yet creates its own. It's 'un-living' organic matter curls together to form a living, thinking organism. It is the antithesis of itself. It simply *is*, but should not and cannot be.

Yumog, however, is trapped inside a singular cave. All it knows is the darkness, but for one-hour of light that cracks the cave mouth, and the incessant sounds of water crashing on the rocks outside the cave. It feeds on whatever it can find—its spores growing and popping each time it feeds, then dying as soon as the spores touch rock or wood or skin. Even the carapace of a crab shell is enough to kill the defenseless spores, which bear a unique weapon of their own. They are powerful, unrelenting hallucinogenics which alter a brain's perceptions and trick the victim into believing they are anywhere but here.

The spores carry the sorrow of Yumog and its lack of understanding of anything other than the cave. The hallucinogen's effects manifest as magnificent worlds beyond imagining.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

3rd-5th level.

ENCOUNTER

The PCs enter a cave which leads to a series of hallucinatory adventures that last as long as the Gamemaster wants. The PCs are unaware of the hallucination. Instead, they think the cave opens into a mystical realm or a pocket dimension inhabited by an assemblage of bizarre and horrifying creatures. The PCs cannot die on this 'quest,' because everything takes place inside their minds. But they can suffer psychological damage, psychosis, and missing memories from Yumog's 'magic' spores.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Any. The attitudes are from the hallucinations the PCs encounter when they are within the cave. After the hallucinations have passed, Yumog and the Cavespawn Lichens greet them with aggression.

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

The cave is damp, but safe from the natural hazards outside. How they find the cave is mundane. PCs are looking for a place to camp, or chase some game into the cave. Regardless, the cave seems normal at first. But the longer they explore the cave, the deeper into the hallucination they go. Eventually, the cave is a distant memory and the PCs are now part of a *new* world, where anything is possible. In the end, something triggers the PCs into understanding they are still inside the cave when the Cave Master is upon them and ready to kill. Prepare a trigger moment that brings them back to reality.

TACTICS

The Cave master strikes when the PCs are nearly out of resources (spells, healing, etc). Whatever resources the PCs have used inside the hallucination are spent before the *real* encounter with Yumog.

Yumog has finished its transformation and is upon the PCs, along with its minions. It clearly has the upper hand, along with having Surprise (lasting one or two rounds). The disoriented PCs come out of their dream state fighting one thing and into the real world again, fighting another.

SCALING

Start with two Cavespawn Lichen minions. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with the Cave Master, do not give the Cave Master Surprise.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with the Cave Master, grant the PCs disadvantage to all rolls until they succeed on a Wisdom saving throws (DC 12) for two consecutive rounds. During this time, they are shaking off the effects of the hallucination.

TREASURE

There is no tangible treasure in the cave. Certainly some previous victim's equipment can be found, but nothing powerful. Instead, the PCs gain abstract treasure. An immediate level is gained, along with a permanent Wisdom stat increase of 1 for surviving such a harrowing and surreal ordeal.



Yumog the Cave Master

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 104 (11d10 + 44)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +5

Skills Deception +6, Perception +5

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

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

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Hallucinogenic Spores. A creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of Yumog must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature suffers mild hallucinations until the start of its next turn. During this time it has disadvantage on attack rolls against Yumog and moves at half speed. Creatures that can't be poisoned are immune to this effect.

Regrowth. If Yumog dies, its body collapses into spores and rotting fungus. The creature's consciousness returns to the spores and rhizomes that suffuse its cave. Its body reforms 1 week later unless the spores housing its consciousness are all destroyed by fire or similar. A wish spell cast before Yumog's body reforms can force it to die permanently.

Spore Telepathy. Yumog is aware of the general presence, but not the exact location, of any creature in contact with the spore cloud in its cave system. It can telepathically communicate with any such creature as if they share a language.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Yumog uses its virulent spores if it can, and then makes two rotting slam attacks.

Rotting Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Virulent Spores (Recharge 5–6). Yumog expels a cloud of spores in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is also poisoned for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Unless undead or a construct, if a creature poisoned in this way is killed, a Cavespaw Lichen rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

Cavespaw Lichen

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +6, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Keen Sight. The cavespaw lichen has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Spider Climb. The cavespaw lichen can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The cavespaw lichen makes two tendril attacks.

Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or fall prone.



ETTIENE, THE RINGLEADER

LORE

While it's rare for an elf to be abandoned at a young age, it's even rarer for one to stumble into a human community. And even more rare to be adopted into a traveling troupe of minstrels and charlatans and then grow up to lead said circus.

Ettiene is one such rarity. In fact, perhaps unique.

Ettiene's life has been shaped by the people around her. Her elvish pedigree has served only to make her powerful, magical, and — without parents to guide her — devoid of a moral compass. The people she hurts and plunders aren't like her. No one is like her, short of the vagabonds in her retinue. Where's the sense of responsibility then?

The Eosturlings have been around a long time—long enough for everyone in the original crew to have passed on and for Ettiene to be the last remaining member. Invariably, she leads the band now, setting her own rules and demanding others follow her examples. Once a merry band of tricksters, the group has turned dark and shows little remorse for their behavior. While all troupes steal and con marks of their coin, the Eosturlings are a different breed. Ettiene's minions are echoes of her own amoral greed. They are loyal, so long as the money keeps coming.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

3rd-6th level.

ENCOUNTER

Ettiene and her crew can be found nearly anywhere. Perhaps they've stopped on the side of the road for the night. Perhaps they've set up shop on the edge of a small town, luring people to their midway events, only to send thieves into the city to steal anything that isn't bolted down. Perhaps they're all in disguise and casing the town, looking for anything magical or shiny. Whatever the case, Ettiene and her crew aren't about to rush into combat. They always play it slow and safe, before stealing what they want and then strolling out of town.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Cautious, Greedy, Suspicious

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Ettiene's crew sees the world through criminal eyes. If we can think of it, so can others. The problem becomes that most people don't think like criminals. So a thief can give himself away simply by over-reacting to things that aren't a real threat. Even after years of chicanery, a thief can slip up and give away their intentions. Which is really the only way the PCs are likely to fight them. Without evidence of their misdeeds, it's unlikely the Eosturlings will start fighting someone randomly. They aren't brigands. They don't do ambushes.

TACTICS

A fight with Ettiene is unlikely. She's smart enough to keep her distance and even smarter about where she hides her ill-gotten gains. She always finds a hiding place far from the caravan before starting a new enterprise. This means that even if people find the loot, it's not on her or her crew. "*We don't know how that got there.*" And if things get rough, she uses her *dimension door* to escape before anything can happen to her (personally).

Should a fight somehow start (and she is never going to start one), Ettiene throws her minions in front of the fray (begin with at least four Jester minions), while searching for an exit. On her first Action she uses her *Discordant Note* and *Leadership*. Then, she might use *hypnotic pattern* before retreating to a safe distance, while her Jesters use *hideous laughter* and *Sneak Attack* to keep the PCs guessing.

The Jesters are masters at maneuvering (*Evasion*), misdirection, and taking advantage of charmed opponents (*Sneak Attack*). No one in the crew ever fights toe-to-toe, or one-on-one. If they find themselves on the losing end, they decamp in random and different directions so the PCs can't possibly catch them all. They are loyal to Ettiene until they can't afford to be loyal anymore.

SCALING

Start with four Jester minions. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with the Ringleader, begin the encounter without her 4th and/or 5th level spells.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with the Ringleader, add more Jester minions, or add low-level thieves and thugs (rogues and fighters) to the mix.

TREASURE

It is hard to fathom the wealth that Ettiene has amassed. Years and years of tricks and thievery have lead to a pile of coins and jewels that is impossible for one person to count. It's as though Ettiene was trying to find something and didn't know when to stop looking. If the PCs search long enough, they eventually find a *deck of many things*, though only three cards remain.





Ettiene the Ringleader

Medium humanoid (elf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +7

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +7, Perception +5, Performance +10

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Elvish, Goblin, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Ettiene has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Spellcasting.

Ettiene is a 9th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability score is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Ettiene knows the following bard spells:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *message*, *minor illusion*
1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *faerie fire*, *thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *heat metal*, *shatter*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *hypnotic pattern*
4th level (3 slots): *confusion*, *dimension door*
5th level (1 slot): *dominate person*, *modify memory*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ettiene makes two dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Discordant Note (Recharge 5–6). Ettiene unleashes a blast of piercing sound from her flute in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) thunder damage and is stunned until the end of its next turn. If the save is successful, the creature takes half damage and is not stunned.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For one minute, Ettiene can play a special tune or speak a warning. Whenever a friendly creature that she can see within 30 feet of her makes an attack roll or a saving throw, the creature can add a d4 to its roll, provided it can hear and understand Ettiene. A creature may benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if Ettiene is incapacitated.

REACTIONS

Charming Tune. When a creature Ettiene can see targets her with an attack, she can play a magical tune on her flute. The attacker must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or choose a new target for the attack. If it doesn't choose a new target, the attack is wasted. The attacker must be able to hear Ettiene. A creature that can't be charmed is immune to this effect.

Jester

Medium humanoid (any), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

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

Skills Acrobatics +5, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Evasion. If the jester is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the jester instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The jester deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the jester that isn't incapacitated and the jester doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The jester makes two dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

Hideous Laughter (Recharges After a Long Rest). The jester casts *hideous laughter* (spell save DC 13), requiring no material components. Use Charisma for its spellcasting ability.

OPTIONAL JESTER ACTIONS

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). Use an action to exhale a 10 ft cone of destructive fire using a torch and specially prepared alcohol. Each creature in the area of the exhalation must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 14). A creature takes 2d6 fire damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one.

Shocking Juggling Balls. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) lightning damage. Use an action to hurl a specially prepared juggling ball at a single target. A jester has 1d6 juggling balls available.

Mocking Attack (Recharge 5-6). When the jester hits a creature with a weapon attack, the target must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15). On a failed save, the target has a disadvantage on all attack rolls against targets other than the jester until the end of your next turn.

ISHMAEL, THE SLAVER

LORE

Kingdoms and caliphates continually fight for the world's resources, boundaries, and treasures. Everywhere there is a border, there is conflict. No two nations seem capable of agreeing over who has the right to fish a river, or mine a mountain, or chop a tree.

Wars happen. And with wars come refugees and deserters.

And with boundaries come dead zones, places where soldiers do not care to navigate or protect. These dead zones are home to black markets, contraband, and criminal enterprise. In the case of Nolangate Valley, Ishmael and his entourage of slavers have found the perfect dead zone. It is dry, isolated, quiet, and rests at the nexus of three kingdoms. Through here, most refugees must travel regardless of which direction they are headed.

Calling themselves the *Tsenahale*—a name referring to a mythical bird that grows offspring from its feathers—the slavers have built a compound in a large notch in the side of the valley. While they have no interest in hiding themselves, they do employ the solid tactics of providing only one way into and out of the compound. This makes it so slaves cannot escape, and in the unlikely event of an attack there is only one side to defend.

Ishmael has ruled over the *Tsenahale* since its inception. He is not ruthless. He has his minions for that. But, he is practical and smart.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

3rd-6th level.

ENCOUNTER

The camp does not move, which means the PCs must find it, stumble upon it, or be invited to it. This dictates how the encounter plays out. PCs sieging the camp find it difficult. PCs hoping to infiltrate the camp and fight from the inside are easily surrounded. PCs performing a nocturnal raid may have a better chance at success.

GMs should determine how many days Ishmael is away from making another deal. Someone is always looking to buy slaves and he has to transport them out of the camp to a neutral location to make the transfer. He does not want anyone knowing where his camp is located. If the PCs take their time, they may actually see a caged wagon carry the slaves out of the camp, under an escort of heavy guards. Attacking them in the open is the safest bet.

The camp is far from the rest of the world, and it is self sufficient.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Authoritative, Criminal, and Immoral

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

The camp conditions for slaves are deplorable. The people they capture are treated like chattel and property; there is no recognition that these are people and not slaves. Depending upon your campaign style, they may be an accurate depiction of life for slaves, or an abhorrent policy. They are still fed and washed, not only to keep them healthy but presentable to potential buyers.

The PCs are likely to either encounter a slave who wants to be freed or a slaver looking to add to the collection. The slavers will likely offer employment to the PCs if they appear powerful and adept.

TACTICS

The slavers are intelligent and suspicious of others. They are professional scoundrels after all, and treat everyone as an adversary especially when money is exchanged. They are always ready for a fight.

In addition to the Taskmasters, Ishmael maintains a following of low-level fighters (8 to 12 Thug NPCs) who are ready for anything, though they are less disciplined than the leaders. PCs will first encounter the low-level fighters and then two to three Taskmasters after rounds one and two.

If the PCs attempt a siege: Every warrior on the wall is armed with a heavy crossbow. The Taskmasters and the warriors engage in ranged combat, while Ishmael shouts orders.

If PCs attempt to infiltrate: Anyone who spots the PCs making a move for the slaves sounds the alarm, and the warriors surround the PCs while the Taskmasters and Slaver command the low-level fighters. Ishmael is likely to fight the most capable fighter in the PCs' group head-on while the Taskmasters are liable to target the cleric and rogue in the group.

If the PCs attempt a night raid: The group is likely to find half of the total guard at their posts. The rest are off drinking. The slavers will take a few rounds to exit their quarters and join the fight once the alarm is sounded. However, if the PCs are smart they will intend to sneak in and out silently as they are vastly outnumbered.

Any fight with the Taskmaster and his thugs involves Pack Tactics. Keep everyone as close to the Taskmasters as possible so they can maximize their abilities. A few soldiers always remain out of melee to fire crossbows at the PCs.

While the slavers are hardy warriors, their weakness is spellcasters. They have little experience against them. If they isolate a spellcaster, they bring all their force to bear. Otherwise, they fight the fighter-types of the group first, with Ishmael using his Binding Chains against a ranger or rogue-looking character.

If Ishmael is reduced to 30 hit points or fewer, he surrenders in a way that does not allow him to lose face in front of the others, going so far as to relinquish some slaves and some of his gold. His men are replaceable. He and the Taskmasters are not. The worst case scenario is that he can kill insubordinate men after the PCs leave to save face.

If the PCs somehow manage to escape with slaves, Ishmael has a tough decision: Does he give chase? Plan his revenge? If the PCs do not kill Ishmael, he goes right back to his business, considering this attack on his camp a minor setback that is most likely an anomaly.

SCALING

Start with four Taskmaster minions. Add additional Taskmasters in rounds three or four if the PCs have an advantage. To decrease the difficulty of encounter, start with 2 Taskmaster minions.

To increase the difficulty of encounter, give Ishmael a magical ranged weapon and *mantle of spell resistance*.

TREASURE

Ishmael has large piles of gold (he does not deal in anything else). Chests are buried away in numerous hidden locations throughout the camp and his personal quarters. He knows the value of ransom money and makes sure no one knows more than one hiding place for his gold. Among the hiding places are numerous ransom notes, and a gold-encrusted medallion linked to a noble. Ishmael also hides a bird feather token under his chain shirt.



Ishmael the Master of Chains, Slaver

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +4

Skills Athletics +7, Deception +6, Intimidation +6, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elvish, Undercommon

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

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

Grappler. Ishmael has advantage on attack rolls against any creature he has grappled.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ishmael uses binding chains, then makes three melee attacks.

Chain. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape Strength check DC 17).

Binding Chains (3/day). If Ishmael is grappling a creature, he can force the creature to make a DC 16 Strength saving throw. On a failure, Ishmael binds the creature with steel manacles (AC 19, 15 hit points). The creature is no longer grappled by Ishmael, but is instead restrained. A creature can break the chains with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, or can open the manacles with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

Ishmael can remove a set of manacles as an action. He can also retrieve a set of unattended manacles within his reach that was removed but not broken (this is a bonus action). In either case, he regains one expended use of Binding Chains.

REACTIONS

Slashing Chains. Ishmael makes a chain attack against a creature that enters his 10 ft. reach.

Taskmaster

Medium humanoid (any), any non-good

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)

Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +3, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Undercommon

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Martial Advantage (1/turn). The taskmaster can deal an extra 3 (1d6) damage to a creature it hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the taskmaster that isn't incapacitated.

Pack Tactics. The taskmaster has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the taskmaster's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

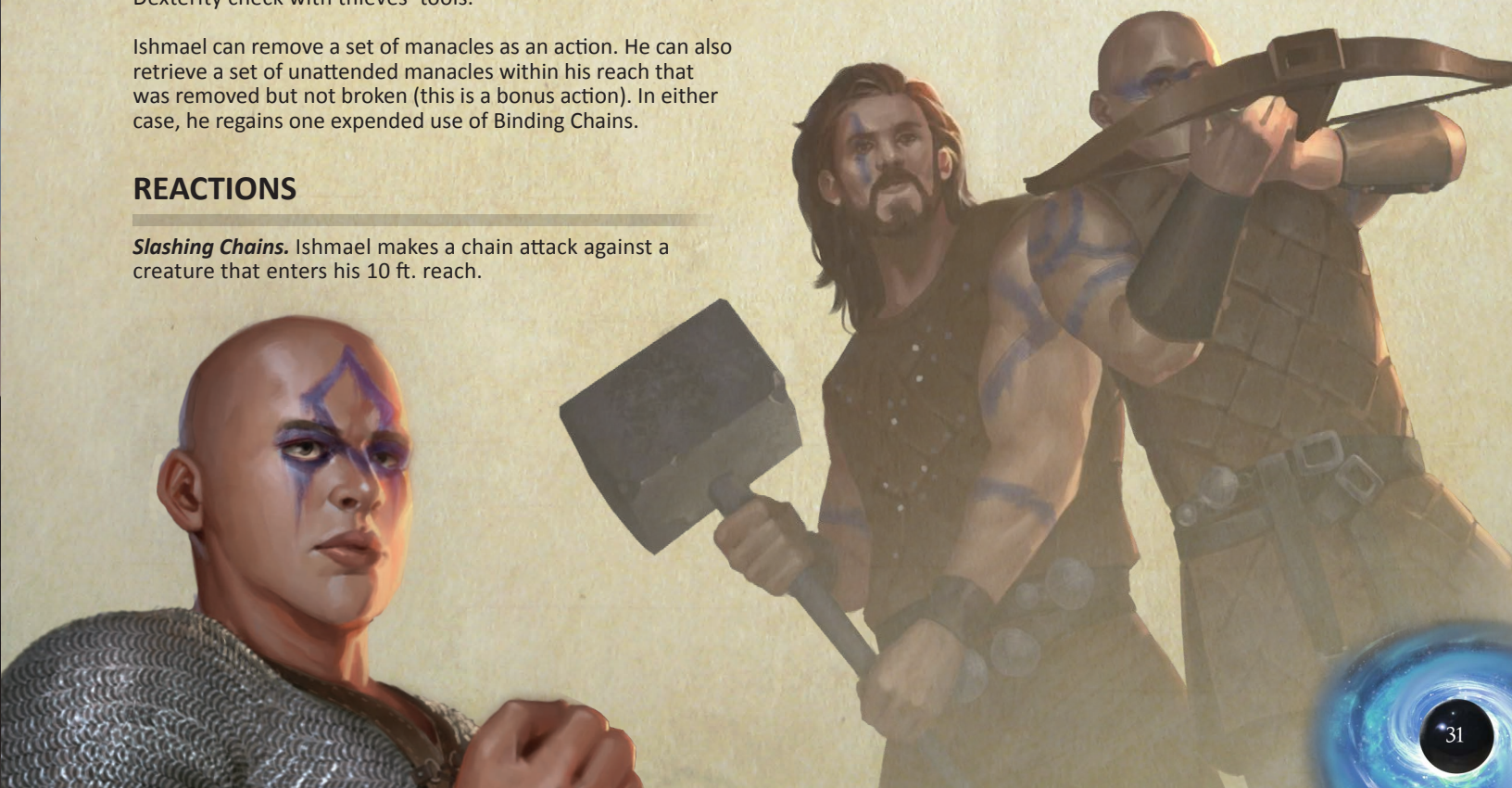
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The taskmaster makes two melee attacks.

Warhammer. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Whip. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.



GRAEL, THE TINKERER

LORE

Grael wasn't always evil, or for lack of a better word... pragmatic. Her philosophies on life were at one time buoyant. But while watching her entire family get slaughtered in war taught her that, for others, life was cheap and meaningless—a lesson that chafed her innocence. She retreated for decades into seclusion to study a better way; to fully understand how elven-kind could live better lives, without fear of conflict and death.

What she found instead was the secret to immortality.

Her magical studies started in earnest. She began by studying the building blocks of magic. Within a few years, she was ready for more. Grael built tiny magical constructs—a beetle that would fly at tremendous speed, or a magical cat that never needed to sleep. As she became more skilled, her focus turned to necromancy and the unlife that could produce eternal life.

Over the years, her studies grew more complex. But unlike a typical wizard, she had no interest for magic that didn't serve her purposes. Spells that harmed others were only learned if they in turn lead to better understanding of her ultimate goal. As she delved deeper into her world, Grael's emotional and physical connection to others faded.

Building a golem from clay, steel, and stone, Grael constructed a place for her soul to live on forever. The process of building the golem took many years. Apprehension and a need for perfection led Grael to take her time, all the while second-guessing her efforts. Progress was painfully slow. Every step forward, it seemed, led to two steps backward. Even to this day, she's still not sure the host body is perfect.

Not trusting others, Grael had to perform the ritual of her immortality alone. She knew her body would become useless as her soul was transported into the golem, therefore she needed to do the ritual somewhere her body would not be desecrated. She found an ancient tomb that was unused for centuries, and brought in all necessary materials to complete the transfer. This process, too, took nearly a year of preparation as she over-thought her own decisions.

In the end, Grael spent several weeks alone planning her 'suicide.' Despite everything, bringing herself to commit the final act and becoming a golem took a great deal of willpower.

Grael ironically builds one-shot figurines—her minions—which do most of her bidding for her. While single-use magic items are easy for her to create, she had trouble mastering specific pieces of the puzzle to unlock her own immortality. This led to the necessity of the golem's creation.

After many years alone, Grael no longer sees humanity as living things. Rather they are breakable and imperfect. Her once noble quest for immortality has turned her into everything she once hated. She uses the sick and infirm in her never-ending quest to create everlasting life.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

6th-9th level.

ENCOUNTER

The tricky part about a recluse like Grael is how and where the PCs encounter her. Rather than trap a GM with a singular path to an encounter, the following is a list of encounter options for Grael:

- A sick person has gone missing from a nearby town. Two of Grael's flying servants have taken an individual from their bed in the dead of night.
- An unfinished golem is discovered. Research indicates that it was abandoned by someone with a high magic proficiency.
- In their quest to resurrect a comrade, the PCs hear rumors of a woman who has defeated mortality.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Aggressive and Untrusting

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Grael is a recluse and guards herself against everything and everyone. Getting to her is not easy. Her lair is well-hidden and once inside, it's a maze of left over parts, trash, and detritus.

TACTICS

Grael does not fight the PCs head on. She fears death as it is her greatest weakness. She starts combat using five Tinkered Servants to engage in melee whenever possible, while using spells at a distance. If she has a chance to escape them, she takes it. Otherwise, she always stays on the move. She has plenty of escape routes at hand, and makes sure she can get to any of them.

Her aerial minions use Flyby to avoid attacks of opportunity, and their talons to harm spellcasters. Mixed with Frenzy, this is a deadly combination.

She keeps at least one guardian minion at her side at all times. More if possible. She is definitely afraid of any tank-like fighter characters who deal massive damage in melee combat. If possible, she casts *mirror image* before this happens.

In the first round of combat, Grael casts *cloudkill*—the effects remain for ten minutes—but she stays out of range. *Note: Cloudkill still affects her minions.* On round two, she orders her minions to attack (while avoiding the *cloudkill* spell), while she casts *lightning bolt* on the furthest PC. If Grael is reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, she flees using *dimension door*.

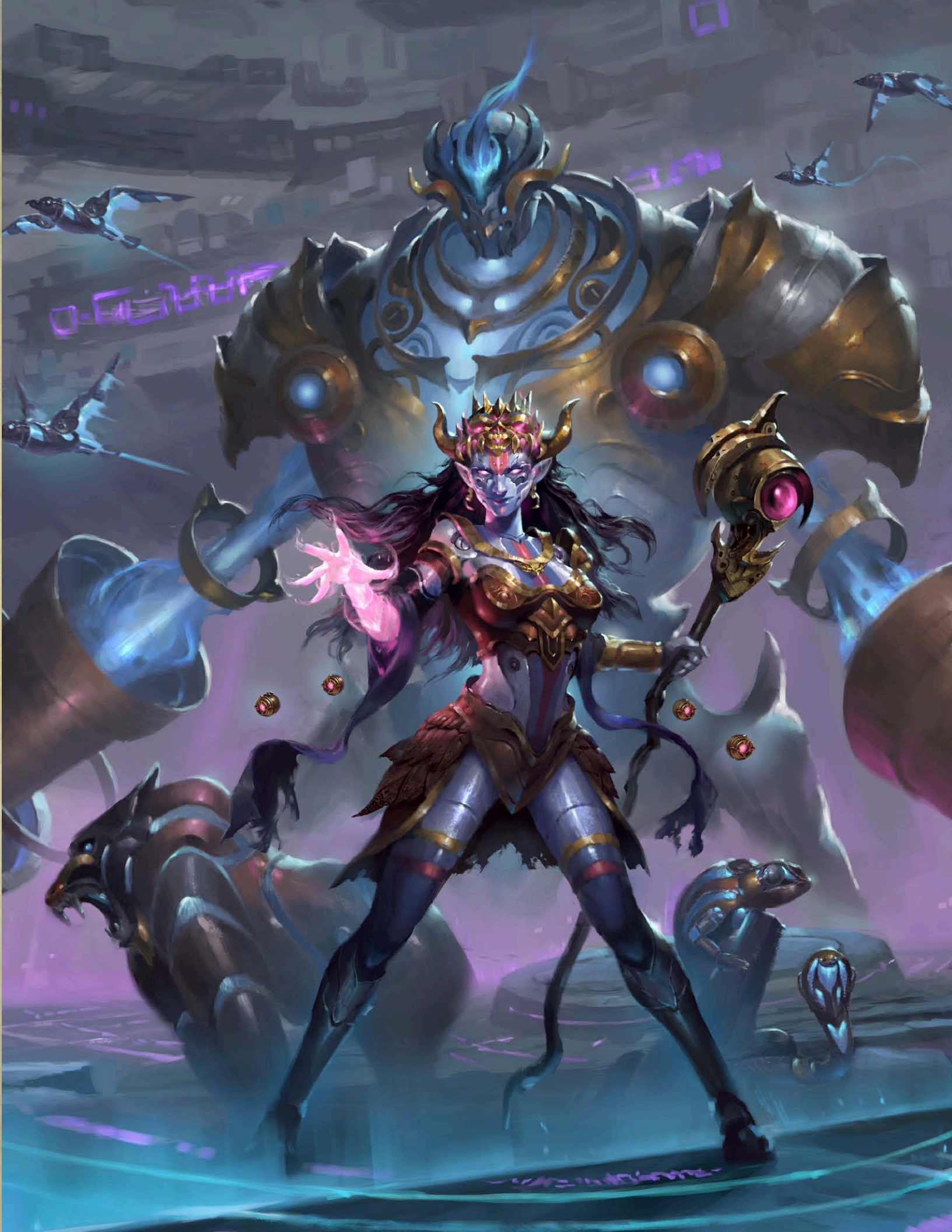
SCALING

Start with four Tinkered Servants. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with the Tinkerer, reduce the number of Tinkered Servants to two.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with the Tinkerer, give Grael up to six *figurines of wondrous power*. Each one lasts for only one or two minutes before it is destroyed.

TREASURE

Grael is rich. She has more gold than she knows what to do with, acquired in the years spent building her laboratory. More important than her gold, however, is the sheer volume of leftover parts in her arsenal. Metal scraps the PCs have never seen before. Her forge is loaded with tools as well. She's had to teach herself about everything she knows and her treasure hoard is a perfect example of what she has at her disposal. A single, unlabeled tome includes over 100 pages of hand-written notes from Grael, regarding the construction of a mechanical hand. Given enough time, resources, and magic, the PCs might be able to create the item that Grael never did.



Grael the Tinkerer

Medium construct, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d8 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, Religion +7

Senses passive Perception 14

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarvish

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Constructed Nature. Grael doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Immutable Form. Grael is immune to any spell or effect that would alter her form.

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

Spellcasting. Grael is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat*, *false life**, *fog cloud*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *mirror image**, *misty step*, *scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*

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

5th level (2 slots): *animate objects*, *cloudkill*

* Grael casts these spells on herself before combat

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Grael uses Rapid Construction if she can, and makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Rapid Construction (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).

Grael magically creates a construct minion out of scrap and spare parts. The construct minion appears in an unoccupied space next to Grael, or the closest available space. Roll initiative for the construct minion. The construct minion acts on its own turn, and obeys Grael's commands. The construct minion acts as an ally of Grael, and remains active for 10 minutes, or until Grael deactivates it as an action. The construct minion has the statistics of a beast with a challenge rating of 5 or lower with the following changes:

- Its type changes to construct
- It has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite
- It is immune to poison damage and exhaustion, and can't be charmed, poisoned, or frightened
- It has blindsight up to 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
- It gains the following trait: *Antimagic Susceptibility*. The minion is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the minion must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.



Tinkered Servant

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft. (aerial), 10 ft., 30 ft. (guardian), 50 ft. (ravager)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Variable Configuration. The tinkered servant has a variable form that is chosen when it is created. Choose aerial, guardian, or ravager. The tinkered servant has different traits and features depending on its configuration.

Antimagic Susceptibility. The servant is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by dispel magic, the servant must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

Constructed Nature. The tinkered servant doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Flyby (Aerial Form Only). The tinkered servant doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of a creature's reach.

Blood Frenzy. (Ravager Form Only). The tinkered servant has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Guardian Form Only). The tinkered servant makes two melee attacks.

Bite (Ravager Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Glaive (Guardian Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Talons (Aerial Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the tinkered servant can't use its talons on another target.

REACTIONS

Protect (Guardian Form Only). When a creature attacks one of the tinkered servant's allies within 5 feet of it, the tinkered servant can increase the ally's AC by 2 against that attack. To do so, it must be able to see the attacker, and be wielding a melee weapon.

THE CREATED

LORE

Somewhere in the PCs' past, someone was hurt. A tavern was burned. A villager was maimed. Or worse. An orc tribe was destroyed, but for one survivor. Someone has been waiting for the day for payback. For vengeance. To settle the score.

That day is here.

The Created is the PCs' equal in every way. She has had time to plan and prepare for the PCs. She has studied them and knows their strengths and weaknesses. She knows what kind of magic they have and what resources are at their disposal. If they own land or have retainers, she knows of this too.

She's had time to amass loyal followers to her side, people that either like the money she provides or who also have a score to settle.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

8th-11th level.

ENCOUNTER

The Created finds the PCs at their weakest. Perhaps they are camped somewhere after being in a horrible fight. Maybe they are separated and can't get to one another quickly. Or, there's a chance they've stumbled into The Created's trap.

The Encounter Conditions below explain more.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Antagonistic, Unrelenting, Vengeful

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

The Created has a score to settle. She has no intentions of hitting the PCs head on. Nor does she want them to die quickly. She intends to haunt and shadow them for as long as possible, before delivering her coup de grace.

The torment starts small. Maybe a note is left somewhere or a pack animal grows sick. Something inexplicable but only mildly annoying strikes the PCs first. Then another thing—though a little more gruesome—happens. Eventually the stalking grows malevolent. A spellbook is stolen (or destroyed). Someone is poisoned. A family member is killed.

The final stroke is when brigands or mercenaries attack the PCs openly because someone mysterious has paid them to. They are open and brazen about it. Now, if the PCs survive this attack, they know they are being hunted. Someone is after them.

TACTICS

The Created has learned a few tricks in the intervening years. Should the PCs figure out who she is—she is prepared for that. And if the PCs are still dumbfounded, that's when she strikes.

She always has Surprise the first round, regardless of anything that happens, using whatever psychological benefits she can muster to keep the PCs on the defensive for as long as possible.

Whoever is the most to blame for her fervor is attacked first. Once engaged, she lacks tactical finesse, instead using all of her most powerful abilities early. If possible, she kills one PC as quickly as possible before moving onto others. It is the job of the Vengeful Blade to keep the PCs occupied, so she isn't surrounded in an encounter.

Tips: Consider having The Created a recurring NPC character that uses guerrilla tactics meant to strike quickly and disappear without a trace. When PCs are most comfortable, this is the best opportunity to shake things up. Maybe a trusted advisor is murdered. Maybe The Created plants rumors about PCs that cause doubt within villages, or the leaders within the cities. The Created makes life miserable for the PCs whenever they can. They should look over their shoulders wondering when the next event might happen.

Perhaps The Created has formulated different types of poisons that are added to PCs' food, or drink when they least expect it. Maybe they are new poison types that cause disease, temporary hit point loss, makes any movement considered difficult terrain, or abilities scores to drop until cured. Be creative. Maybe The Created uses smoke bombs, barbed arrows that cause more damage when removed, acid attacks, or alchemical fire when the PCs are in alleyways, or spaces where they can be attacked from above. The Created would use these tactics to cause the PCs physical and psychological harm before they are even aware she exists.

SCALING

Start with three Vengeful Blade minions. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with The Created, remove all ranged attacks from The Created and Vengeful Blade minions.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with The Created, add some hired help, along with another NPC who has something to gain from the PC's deaths.

TREASURE

The Created has spent all of her money in her quest to destroy the PCs. There is nothing to take from her. Among her personal effects is a piece of paper with all of the PCs names on it, plus one more unidentified name.



The Created

Medium humanoid (any), any non-good

Armor Class 18 (+1 studded leather and +1 shield)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +6

Skills Athletics +9, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common plus any three languages

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Best Served Cold. Creatures within 30 feet of The Created have disadvantage on death saving throws.

Implacable. The Created has advantage on all saving throws.

Vengeful Strikes. The Created's weapon attacks are magical, and deal an additional 2d8 psychic damage (included in the attack).

Escape. The Created can take a Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

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

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) psychic damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) psychic damage if used with two hands.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) psychic damage.

Retribution's Howl (Recharge 5–6). The Created lets out a howl of fury. Each enemy creature within a 30-foot cone must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) psychic damage and is stunned for 1 minute on a failed save, or half as much damage and isn't stunned on a successful one. A stunned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on a success.

REACTIONS

Parry. The Created adds 4 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, The Created must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Vengeful Blade

Medium humanoid (any), any non-good

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4,

Skills Stealth +4

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common plus one other language

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the vengeful blade deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the vengeful blade that isn't incapacitated and the vengeful blade doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Escape. The vengeful blade can take a Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vengeful blade makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage.



GRISSEK'K, THE ORC QUEEN

LORE

Grissek'k was born with voices in her head, guiding her thoughts and actions. From a young age, she learned the voices were ancestors only she could hear. They had insight into a greater world and from these voices she became an invaluable member of her tribe.

As she aged, those voices took a more corporeal form in the veil runners, ghostly shapes that follow her and tend to her needs. Where an orc soldier may be a killing machine, he may not be good at following orders. The Veil Runners are loyal when entering the shadowy other-world from whence they came.

Unlike her contemporaries who killed one another to sit upon the orc throne, Grissek'k earned her way up, serving as a soldier, then captain, and finally a field marshal before taking the mantle of Queen upon her cousin's death. All the way to the top, she lead by example, defying her kin's brutish manners of war. Instead, she leads through intelligent planning and with thoughtful tactics.

Some questioned her skills and courage for acting so unlike an orc. But those orcs are dead now, and the Orc Queen has remained on the throne—longer than any could have predicted. Dispatching those who are incapable of thinking beyond murder, Grissek'k has forged the deadliest orc army in centuries.

Armed and ready to fight with tooth and claw, she is a force without equal.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

8th -11th level.

ENCOUNTER

It is unlikely the PCs *just stumble* upon the Orc Queen. She is most likely the architect behind a number of carefully executed raids or machinations no one would expect from an orc. The default encounter is to find her in her throne room at the end of a massive and labyrinthine cave complex. She won't be easy to find and those who come after her are sure to encounter a number of traps and tricks before reaching her final fortress.

Whatever happens, the PCs should be beaten and tired before reaching the Orc Queen. Minimal rests leading up to the final encounter with her are suggested.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Suspicious and unkind

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Grissek'k learned an important lesson at a young age: *Always choose the place where the battle will take place.* When she grew older, she understood that a great tactician lets her opponent think they **CHOSE** that place. Give an opponent two choices to be ambushed and they will still choose to be ambushed, but he will fight on as though he has the upper hand.

TACTICS

Employing genius tactics in a role playing game is difficult, especially if the Gamemaster is not a master strategist. To reflect the Orc Queen's cunning, some aspects of her strategy appear as abstract bonuses in combat. When possible, she flanks her enemies, regardless.

Her opponents always begin any combat Surprised, regardless of how they approach the situation. This may not make literal sense in every encounter, but this can be done through a number of tools. Camouflage, a dropped net, distractions, fire from above, and so on. Grissek'k always has a trick up her sleeve. Use that to your advantage.

She is also smart enough to never let herself get pinned into a corner or flanked. Use her minions to keep the PCs occupied. Allow her to strike from a distance at times, or hurl a *javelin of lightning* at clerics and wizards (early in the fight) to negate their magical powers. One on one, she can take any rogue, so her minions know to keep fighters and wizards busy.

Let the rogue through. Let him believe his cunning has gotten him into an advantageous position. Then drop a trap on him.

Note: Additional Orc tactics are provided on page 87.

SCALING

Start with four Veil Runner minions. For decreasing the difficulty of encounters with Grissek'k, do not let her get Surprise on her opponents. GMs might consider reducing the number of Veil Runners to two as well, adding more in later rounds if need be.

For increasing the difficulty of encounters with Grissek'k, give her more magical items (*brooch of shielding*, or a *horn of blasting*) and potions (*potion of invulnerability*, or *potion of speed*) to use to her advantage. She may also use all eight Veil Runner minions at once (if available), which would scale the CR encounter level to deadly if PCs are unprepared.

TREASURE

If the PCs are able to find Grissek'k's lair, they find a number of trophies among her personal effects, including the banner from her old tribe and the skull of a local paladin who died fighting her. Among her effects are one minor magic item ideal for each character. These are items without an immediate and obvious effect, hence why she does not carry them with her.



Grissek'k the Orc Queen

Medium humanoid (orc), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (Favor from Beyond)

Hit Points 110 (13d8 + 52)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Wis +5

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +5, Insight +5, Persuasion +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Orc

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc queen can move up to her speed toward a hostile creature that she can see.

Queen's Fury. The orc queen deals an extra 4 (1d8) damage when she hits with a weapon attack (included in the attacks).

Favor from Beyond. The orc queen has an armor class of 18. This is a magical ability.

Stunning Assault. If the orc queen hits a creature with two or more melee attacks in the same turn, the creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of the orc queen's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orc queen makes three attacks with her battle axe, or javelin.

Battle Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) slashing damage, or 15 (1d10 + 6 plus 1d8) slashing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Javelin of Lightning. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., each creature in the 5 foot wide line of lightning. *Hit:* 14 (1d6 + 6 plus 1d8) piercing damage, plus 12 (4d6) lightning damage (DC 13 Dex save for half). The *javelin of lightning* is a magic weapon.

REACTIONS

Parry. The orc queen adds 3 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit her. To do so, the orc queen must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



Veil Runner

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +3

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Deep Speech, Orc, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Displacement. The veil runner projects a magical illusion that makes it appear to be standing near its actual location, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of its next turn. This trait is also disrupted while the veil runner is incapacitated or has a speed of 0.

Evasive Step. The veil runner's movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Rejuvenation. When the veil runner dies, its body disintegrates and releases its soul into a cloud of bluish-gray mist. After 24 hours, the mist soul reforms into a new body and regains all its hit points. While the soul is bodiless, a *wish* spell can be used to force the soul back to the strange realm of its origin.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The veil runner makes two attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Veil Bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) psychic damage. The veil bow is a magic weapon.

New Magic Item: Veil Bow

Weapon (longbow), rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. On a hit with the bow, the target takes an additional 1d6 psychic damage.

Curse.

The bow is cursed with the twisted, otherworldly nature of the veil runner that created it. Becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. Over the course of a week, as long as you remain cursed, your skin takes on the bluish-gray cast, and your eyes become the luminous green of the veil runners. Once the transformation is complete you have disadvantage on Charisma checks.

In addition, the veil runner who created the bow gains a psychic link with you. The veil runner knows the distance and direction to you, and can use its action to read your surface thoughts for 1 round.

MAUGH, THE TROLL

LORE

Where do trolls even come from? Sure there are stories and legends. Everyone likes to blame things on magic. But that's too easy. Magic can be blamed for owl bears and golems, but trolls are something else entirely. Some are "born" savage, while others have the presence of mind to lead other trolls.

The most terrifying trolls, however, are those with some insight or prescience into the matters of the world around them, knowing full-well their strengths and weaknesses and how to overcome them.

Mauugh is such a troll.

After discovering a magical ring bearing three wishes, Mauugh immediately wished for fire immunity and a retinue of guardians to protect him at all times.

Mauugh's wish was granted immediately and he found himself with immense power he never-before possessed. He scoured the earth, killing and taking what he pleased for years. His treasure hoard grew so large, he had no place to store it.

Over time, Mauugh felt his body growing tired of adventure and he wished a home for himself. Taking what he could, he and his bodyguard erected a citadel on the edge of the known lands, where he could be left alone with his kingdom, far from the annoying sounds of the humans he'd spent years decimating.

The day came when Mauugh felt lonely. His kingdom had no heir. No bride to share his good fortune with. Destined not to seek out someone who understood him, Mauugh used his third and final wish for a bride. Someone to be his equal. Someone to challenge him for the rest of his days.

But Mauugh was unaware the wishes came with a curse. Upon meeting and embracing his bride for the first time, his body exploded in flame—a power he did not know he possessed—and she was instantly killed.

Mauugh's fate was sealed that day. He would have no wife. No child to take over his kingdom. Nothing to call his own. Planning for the future seemed futile now. Mauugh settled into a deep depression and turned his gaze elsewhere.

It seemed his life of adventure would never be over.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

9th-12th level.

ENCOUNTER

Mauugh's history may or may not be known to the PCs. The reasons they've ventured to the citadel are numerous. Does he possess something they need? Are they stumbling upon the citadel? Have they followed the wrong clue to the farthest reaches of the world? Has the frontier expanse of the human empire made its way to Mauugh's doorstep and now the PCs must investigate why people are dying?

Mauugh does not venture out of his citadel, much. Of late, though, his depression and rage have gotten the most of him. He sometimes takes his frustration out on the world and harms others in the process.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Arrogant, Authoritative, Bullish

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

The PCs may meet Mauugh inside or outside of his keep.

If they find him inside, the interior of the citadel appears somewhat alien to the PCs. While the basic layout appears like any stronghold leading to a throne room, the architecture is strange. The interior walls are smooth and nearly seamless, while the exterior looks like it was thrown together by monkeys without any care or skill.

Once they enter the throne room, they find Mauugh, alone with his sufferings. Mauugh may not want to fight someone immediately. If they find him outside, he is most likely itching for a fight.

TACTICS

Mauugh's main weapon is being a troll who is immune to fire. This should not be obvious at first, however. PCs who have fought trolls before will expect their fireballs and torches to harm the beast.

But they would be wrong.

Mauugh is somewhat fearless. With his retinue of Fireborn guardians, Mauugh has ravaged the countryside for years, leaving a literal scorched-earth in his wake. He has yet to encounter a force that could stop him.

Once it is clear to the PCs that fire isn't doing anything, Mauugh unleashes with his Immolate attack on anyone he is grappling.

Mauugh's Fireborn guardians do not appear at first. After decades as his only companionship, he finds them annoying to keep around. But on the second or third round of combat, he summons them with a snap of his fingers. Four immediately appear. Strategically placed flammable objects and oil-filled braziers occupy the room and ignite immediately once the Fireborn appears.

One Fireborn guardian bars the doors to prevent the PCs from escaping, while the others engage. PCs suffer fire damage each round they are exposed to the flames.

After years without equal, Mauugh has no concept of his own mortality and he will fight to the death if necessary. If that's possible.

SCALING

Start with four Fireborn minions. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with Mauugh, increase the number of rounds Mauugh fights without his Fireborn guardians by two.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with Mauugh, give him a fourth wish that he can use during the fight.

TREASURE

Mauugh has amassed five adventurers' life-times worth of gold, some of which has been spent on heirlooms and affectations for his citadel. Among the belongings are numerous shields, weapons, and magical items. There should be something ideal for each PC among the effects, including an unused *ring of three wishes* (cursed) with one charge left. The PCs should assume the ring is real and Mauugh simply forgot to use his last wish.

When worn, the ring declares (in the PC's mind) "What is thy bidding, o' master?"



Mauugh the Troll

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 157 (15d10 + 75)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Giant, Ignan

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Blazing Strikes. Mauugh's weapon attacks are magical. When Mauugh hits with any weapon attack, he deals an extra 2d6 fire damage (included in the attack).

Keen Smell. Mauugh has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration. Mauugh regains 10 hit points at the start of his turn. If Mauugh takes acid damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of Mauugh's next turn. Mauugh dies only if he starts his turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Mauugh uses immolate, and then makes three attacks: one with his bite and two with his claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Mauugh has two claws, each of which can grapple only one target.

Immolate. If Mauugh is grappling creatures at the start of his turn, each creature catches fire. The creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage immediately, and at the start of each of its turns. A creature can douse the flames as an action.

Fireborn

Medium elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Giant, Ignan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Blazing Body. A creature that touches the fireborn or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

Illumination. The fireborn sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fireborn makes two attacks.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Kindling Curse (1/day). Two Fireborn within 30 feet of each other can both use this ability simultaneously to target a creature at least one of them can see within 60 feet it. The creature is magically cursed with vulnerability to fire damage. When the cursed creature takes double damage from fire because of this curse it can make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, it loses fire vulnerability until the start of its next turn.



LORD SEBASTIAN, THE UNDEAD KING

LORE

Lord Sebastian's name and title have been lost to history books. Fading into obscurity over 300 years ago, his land and castle have turned to rubble, receding into the forest that reclaimed it. Where and why and all the questions people have about things is meaningless here. People don't know who Sebastian is. Nor do they care. All they know is to avoid the Varella Forest. Those who avoid it, stay alive.

Those who don't...

Lord Sebastian is a vampire. Like any vampire, he needs to feed to survive. Blood. Lots of blood is needed to maintain his power. He cannot do this alone anymore. At last count, over one thousand people have died in order to maintain his undeath. This could not be accomplished without a massive retinue of devoted and loyal "gaunts." Gaunts is the name Sebastian has given to those obedient thralls who work to bring him more food... and sometimes more gaunts. Powerful gaunts.

The more powerful the gaunts, the more powerful Sebastian can become.

Despite his centuries of planning and work, Sebastian's fate is uncertain. Even with a large squad of gaunts and other soldiers, his castle lies far from "food" sources. People have learned to avoid the Varella Forest. The only nearby village is nothing but the elderly and infirm. Their blood is useless to him.

Previous plans included midnight raids in far away cities, but this put his unlife at risk. And sending his own soldiers far away meant it was possible they would be followed back to his "castle." His domain.

In order to adapt to the changing world, Sebastian has taken over a new place, closer to civilization. He's mastered the routes he can take in the dead of night to get from his first castle to this new underground vault to two nearby cities where people can go missing for weeks before anyone takes notice.

Sebastian's plan has taken decades to foment. But it's been working. Slowly. Quietly. People have disappeared and only now are starting to suspect that something is amiss. The citizens of Moruga live under a shadowy mountain where superstitions about man-eating wolves fill the void of knowledge and logic. The people of Galvaz toil in their work, keeping up with the growing population and costs of living, while the most desperate are pulled into the night by gaunts who serve Lord Ruiz.

People are afraid to travel alone now. Massive caravans arrive twice per month, with inflated prices (for protection)—and often with not-enough cargo for everyone. Fear is currency here. Slave traders feed off of it. Opportunists take advantage of people who are desperate. And behind it all, the gaunts and Lord Ruiz pray upon everything... and everyone.

The tension is beyond measure. The tipping point is reaching again.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

12th-14th level.

ENCOUNTER

There are dozens of ways Lord Sebastian can encounter the PCs. Maybe they have tracked him down to his lair. Maybe they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe they are planning to siege the castle, when he attacks the night before. The list goes on. Whatever the case, he is a vampire lord, surrounded by minions.

Sebastian's gaunts are fanatical. Unlike traditional spawn, they serve him because they want to. Any encounter in his lair reflects this.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Arrogant, Conniving, Disrespectful

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Sebastian can be encountered nearly anywhere, but avoids conflict at his home. If it is discovered, he must find a new lair. His vault is well-hidden in the new castle, but it's still not safe to be there once it's discovered. His original home is lost to time and there is no way the PCs would ever find it. The ideal encounter conditions is while he is hunting his prey in one of the two nearby cities. An urban fight, at midnight, is truly the kind of combat the player will remember long after it's over.

TACTICS

Sebastian never goes looking for the PCs, unless he knows one is alone and can be killed easily. He never engages in a fight he knows he can't win and never lets himself get surrounded by powerful adventurers. His strength is culling the herd and adding to his retinue.

Sebastian regains 20 hit points at each turn, if he can. This makes him formidable. Going a few rounds without taking damage can turn the battle in his favor.

If he has the Bloodwell to spend (see page 48), Sebastian takes one Bloodwell as a bonus action each round. He can take more if he needs to, but always keep five in reserve. The most potent use of Bloodwell is the extra damage he can deal. Mixed with a Bite attack, Sebastian becomes a powerful opponent in hand-to-hand combat.

He will attempt to Charm PCs within 30 ft. Sebastian charms them into standing idly by or protecting him. He knows he can't get them to harm themselves or friends, but charmed characters can get in the way of the other PCs. And it's one less person to fight at the moment. Ideally, all of the adventurers are charmed and he can make his escape.

The gaunts keep PCs occupied in one-on-one combat, pushing their way through to spellcasters if possible. Keep two gaunts within 5 feet of Sebastian in order to use their Tribute to the Master action.

Maneuver Sebastian to use his bite attack on a PC at the right moment. He can't do this too quickly—the target must be subdued by Sebastian's minions first.

Tactics, Scaling and Treasure continued on page 46.

Tactics continued...

His biggest threat are spellcasters he cannot reach. Therefore, he must shapechange to reach the back of the party when it is most advantageous to do so. Wizards with potent spells are obvious targets.

Lord Sebastian takes every opportunity to escape if he determines it's a losing battle. Even if reduced to 0 hit points, Misty Escape activates and he flees. He has lived this long and does everything in his power to carry out his plans. Gaunts only attempt to flee if Lord Sebastian flees, or is somehow killed. They gladly defend their lord to the death.

Sebastian will not fight in daylight or close to dawn. If he is able, he summons bats or wolves to his aid while escaping.

SCALING

Start with four Gaunts. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with Sebastian, he begins the encounter with 5 bloodwell.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with Sebastian, he begins the encounter with 20 bloodwell (double the maximum) and his Gaunts can provide up to 2 bloodwell each.

TREASURE

Sebastian has no use for treasure. What he does amass is used to pay his gaunts and black marketers. His lair is filled with novelties and fine tchotchkes, if the PCs are inclined to take those. But they are mostly for decoration and a close inspection shows they aren't worth much.

On each hand is a ring, tied to his old life. They are worn smooth from age, but bear a slight bit of magic, albeit foreign and unidentifiable. This is the GM's opportunity to be creative and allow the PCs to research Sebastian's past, or the history of the rings.





Lord Sebastian, the Undead King

Medium undead (shapechanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +7, Cha +9

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +9

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages the languages he knew in life

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Bloodwell. Lord Sebastian draws strength from his victims' blood, and stores it in a pool of points called his bloodwell. He can have a maximum of 10 points in his bloodwell. When he finishes a long rest, roll a d4 and reduce his current bloodwell points by the result rolled. If he has no points in his bloodwell after the reduction, he gains 1 level of exhaustion, and he can't reduce his current exhaustion level until he has at least 1 point in his bloodwell.

If he reaches 6 levels of exhaustion in this way, he is reduced to 0 hit points and activates Misty Escape. Once in his resting place, Lord Sebastian can't remove exhaustion levels and remains helpless until he has at least 1 point in his bloodwell.

When he deals necrotic damage to a creature other than a construct or undead with his bite, he regains 1 point of bloodwell. If the creature dies from the bite, he regains an additional number of spent bloodwell equal to the creature's Constitution modifier (minimum of 1).

Lord Sebastian can spend points from his bloodwell to use the following options:

- **Alacrity.** Spend 1 point of bloodwell to take the Dodge action as a bonus action.
- **Ferocity.** Spend 1 point of bloodwell when he hits with a melee attack to deal an additional 14 (4d6) damage.
- **Flesh of Clay.** Spend 2 points of bloodwell to use his Shapechanger trait as a bonus action.
- **Night's Embrace.** Spend 2 points of bloodwell to take the Hide action as a bonus action. If Lord Sebastian is in dim light he can Hide without cover, even while being observed.
- **Unholy Resilience.** Spend 3 points of bloodwell at the start of his turn. His Harmed by Running Water and Sunlight Hypersensitivity traits don't function until the start of his next turn.

Shapechanger. If Lord Sebastian isn't in sunlight or running water, he can use his action to polymorph into a Tiny bat or a Medium cloud of mist, or back into its true form.

While in bat form, he can't speak, his walking speed is 5 feet, and he has a flying speed of 30 feet. His statistics, other than his size and speed, are unchanged. Anything he is wearing transforms with him, but nothing he is carrying does. He reverts to its true form if he dies.

While in mist form, Lord Sebastian can't take any actions, speak, or manipulate objects. He is weightless, has a flying speed of 20 feet, can hover, and can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. In addition, if air can pass through a space, the mist can do so without squeezing, and he can't pass through water. He has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution damage, except the damage he takes from sunlight.

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

Misty Escape. When Lord Sebastian drops to 0 hit points outside his resting place, he transforms into a cloud of mist (as in the Shapechanger trait) instead of falling unconscious, provided that he isn't in sunlight or running water. If he can't transform, he is destroyed.

While he has 0 hit points in mist form, he can't revert to his vampire form, and he must reach his resting place within 2 hours or be destroyed. Once in his resting place, he reverts to his vampire form. He is then paralyzed until he regains at least 1 hit point. After spending 1 hour in his resting place with 0 hit points, he regains 1 hit point.

Regeneration. Lord Sebastian regains 20 hit points at the start of his turn if he has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If he takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn.

Spider Climb. Lord Sebastian can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check. Climbing speed is equal to walking speed.

Vampire Weaknesses. Lord Sebastian has the following flaws:

Forbiddance. He can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Harmed by Running Water. He takes 20 acid damage if he ends his turn in running water.

Stake to the Heart. If a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into Lord Sebastian's heart while he is incapacitated in his resting place, he is paralyzed until the stake is removed.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. Lord Sebastian takes 20 radiant damage when he starts his turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, he has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. (Vampire Form Only). Lord Sebastian makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Unarmed Strike (Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Lord Sebastian can grapple the target (escape DC 18).

Bite. (Bat or Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Lord Sebastian, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Lord Sebastian regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a Gaunt under Lord Sebastian's control.

Charm. Lord Sebastian targets one humanoid he can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see him, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed by Lord Sebastian. The charmed target regards him as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under his control, it takes his requests or actions in the most favorable way it can, and it is a willing target for Lord Sebastian's bite attack.

Each time Lord Sebastian or his companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours or until Lord Sebastian is destroyed, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

Children of the Night (1/Day). Lord Sebastian magically calls 2d4 swarms of bats or rats, provided that the sun isn't up. While outdoors, he can call 3d6 wolves instead. The called creatures arrive in 1d4 rounds and act as allies of Lord Sebastian and obey his spoken commands. The beasts remain for 1 hour, until the Lord Sebastian dies, or until he dismisses them as a bonus action.

Blood Spear. Unique magic item (requires undead attunement). Lord Sebastian makes a spear attack. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 12 (2d10+4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack. On a successful hit, a creature takes an additional 2d6 necrotic damage and restores the same hit points amount to Lord Sebastian.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Lord Sebastian can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The vampire regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. Lord Sebastian moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Unarmed Strike. Lord Sebastian makes one unarmed strike.

Bite (Costs 2 Actions). Lord Sebastian makes one bite attack.

Blood Spear (Costs 2 Actions). Lord Sebastian makes one blood spear attack.

Gaunt

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3 Stealth +6

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Regeneration. The Gaunt regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the Gaunt takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the Gaunt's next turn.

Spider Climb. The Gaunt can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check. Climbing speed is equal to walking speed.

Vampire Weaknesses. The Gaunt has the following flaws:

Forbiddance. The Gaunt can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Harmed by Running Water. The Gaunt takes 20 acid damage when it ends its turn in running water.

Stake to the Heart. The Gaunt is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into its heart while it is incapacitated in its resting place.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the Gaunt has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Gaunt makes three attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the Gaunt can instead grapple the target (escape DC 14).

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the gaunt, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the gaunt regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Tribute to the Master. The Gaunt offers blood to Lord Sebastian if he is within 5 feet. The Gaunt loses 56 hit points, and Lord Sebastian regains 1 point of bloodwell. The Gaunt can offer its blood even if Lord Sebastian is incapacitated.

BALLEG, THE RAVAGED WYRM

LORE

Balleg is not a name uttered lightly. Children who use it as a curse word are disciplined, quickly and severely. It is not a name used in jest. Or uttered without some understanding of why you are saying it.

Even whispering its name can summon it.

There are many dragons in the world. No one knows for sure how many. But those who live here, rule through various laws and expectations. Red dragons are still evil, but you know what to expect. Gold dragons are still good, and you know what you're in for.

But Balleg... Balleg is another story entirely. Balleg redefines evil.

Born with tattered wings and plucked from the Void—where all magic is born—Balleg was summoned by a powerful necromancer, Gjorn. Looking to avoid detection from any and all powerful things, the wizard squeezed the newborn dragon through the tiniest pinhole in the Void. Upon this 'birth,' Balleg was thrust into this world and imprisoned by Gjorn.

As painful as that sounds, Balleg's life was about to get worse.

For two decades, Balleg was the subject of every cruel experiment Gjorn could fathom. Using the dragon's body as a magical focus, Gjorn carved away at the dragon's flesh, using every piece he could to study all the extremities of magic. The experiments were excruciating, as Balleg's body was ripped apart.

Gjorn realized the dragon would not live long at this pace. And since the magic expended summoning Balleg was far too great to attempt again, he knew this was the only living subject he'd ever have. Gjorn turned his attention to extending Balleg's 'life.'

His plan was simple: *turn the dragon undead.*

Using a complicated ritual, Gjorn placed Balleg into a force cage and scorched its body with magic. Hours turned to days, as the necromancer summoned every ounce of magic he knew to transform the dragon into unliving flesh. But Gjorn failed to understand the Void. It does not obey the laws of magic the way other elements do. Instead of weakening, Balleg grew in power. The dragon's flesh became something... other-worldly.

The necro-dragon's flesh is half-missing. In its place, a spectral image of what Balleg believes he should look like. In this form, Balleg is half-dragon and half-ethereal beast, but all undead. Its flesh is just a tool for navigating the physical world. Its shape, a tool for striking fear into the weak-willed and superstitious masses. Balleg is not subtle. Balleg is waking destruction.

Balleg wants the world to pay for what has happened to him. His vengeance knows no specific target.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

13th-16th level.

ENCOUNTER

Balleg's story belongs in any campaign. GMs are encouraged to write rumors of a twisted, malevolent half-dragon into their campaigns long before the PCs ever encounter Balleg. When they do, it should already have entire regions of the world under its thumb. Balleg easily has the power to control a town or small city. Even a shire. The stories leading up to its control are up to the GMs to devise. But just looking at Balleg should be enough to convince players the average footmen is no match against a flying dragon that is only visible half the time.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Rage

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

There are two ways to encounter Balleg:
Out in the open, or in its lair.

In the open, Balleg descends upon the PCs. It does not wait for them to find him underground. It attacks them in an open field where there is no place to hide.

In its lair, Balleg uses its Incorporeal Form to hide and pounce upon the PCs in a deadly ambush. See page 53 for more on the lair. Do not ignore the Regional Effects on page 53.

TACTICS

Balleg is especially hateful of spellcasters. Its first action is to burn them to the ground, regardless of who else is there. Its tactics are not stupid or wild, but they aren't exactly field marshal smart, either.

If an opportunity presents itself, even if a normal person would know it's a trap, it strikes.

Balleg does not give hardy-looking PCs the chance to surprise it, or catch it in a cave like a hibernating bear. It can also keep its distance from the PCs, using Enervating Breath on clerics and wizard-types. Balleg uses Legendary Resistance wisely. It is well aware of what constitutes powerful magic and reserves this ability for only better spells.

Outside, Balleg attacks the PCs from a distance, keeping them guessing with aerial moves and its magical spells — *earthquake* (500 ft range) and *chain lightning* (150 ft range) are used early, while its Incorporeal Movement and *black tentacles* (90 ft) are used as a surprise attack against an unwitting foe (a spellcaster perhaps) after several rounds of fighting. If a wizard gets within 60 ft of Balleg, it casts *telekinesis* immediately, lifting the wizard in the air and keeping them in its grip.

Underground, Balleg fights tooth and nail. While surrounded it uses his Ghostly Surge. It alternates its lair actions to summon more minions to its aid. Balleg uses his Incorporeal Movement to get behind the enemies, or maneuver when surrounded. It fights like a caged animal, but it has the mind of a wizard, which means it's not going to let anyone get the best of it.

Just when the PCs think they have the advantage, it uses a Legendary Action or its Incorporeal Movement to get away. Or it taps into a power they didn't know he had.

Regardless of where Balleg encounters the PCs, it knows the advantage of keeping itself at a distance from adventurers. It has plenty of minions to throw at the PCs to keep them busy until it can get in tight and hurt them.

SCALING

Start with one more Corrupted minion than the PC party. To decrease the difficulty, remove the regional effects and/or reduce the number of Corrupted in the encounter to the number of PCs.

To increase the difficulty, allow Balleg to cast each spell twice per day, instead of once per day.

TREASURE

Balleg's previous master owned powerful magic items that survived the dragon's wrath. Spellbooks, necromantic theory, and a map to the largest, hidden graveyard in the world make up the lion's share of the treasure. The pièce de résistance, Balleg's tormentor left behind an indestructible iron coffin. Its true purpose is unknown, however.



Balleg the Ravaged Wyrn

Huge undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 161 (14d12 + 80)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +10, Wis +7, Cha +8

Skills Arcana +9, Perception +12, Stealth +6

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

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

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

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

- Inside lair, 1/day each: *blight*, *cloudkill*, *finger of death*, *vampiric touch*
- Outside lair, 1/day each: *earthquake*, *chain lightning*, *black tentacles*, *telekinesis*

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). If Balleg fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Turning Defiance. Balleg and any other undead within 30 feet of Balleg have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Balleg can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Balleg's Frightful Presence. Each creature of Balleg's choice that is within 120 feet of Balleg and aware of it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature 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 Balleg's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours. A creature has disadvantage on saving throws made against this ability.

Enervating Breath (Recharge 5–6). Balleg exhales waves of necrotic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 49 (14d6) necrotic damage and is weakened for 1 minute, suffering disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws based on Strength on a failed save, or half as much damage and isn't weakened on a successful one. A weakened creature can repeat the save at the end of its turn, ending the effect on itself on a success. *Lesser restoration* or similar magic also removes the weakness.

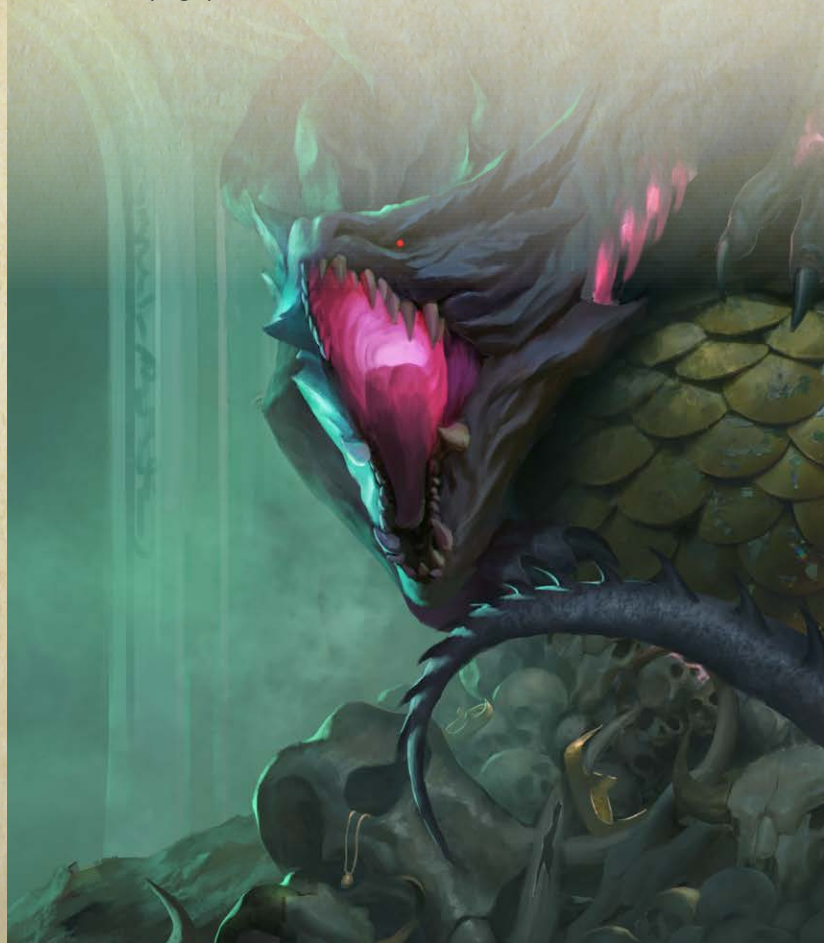
LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Balleg can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Balleg regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Death Sight (Costs 3 Actions). Balleg targets a single creature that it can see. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 30 (6d10) necrotic damage. The target dies if the Death Sight reduces it to 0 hit points.

Tail Attack. Balleg makes a tail attack.

Ghostly Surge (Costs 2 Actions). Balleg releases a surge of necrotic energy. Each creature within 10 feet of Balleg must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 12 (2d6 + 5) necrotic damage and be knocked prone. Balleg can then fly up to half its flying speed.



BALLEG'S LAIR

Balleg's Lair is claustrophobic and cramped. The route to Balleg's final lair is constrained, while the final resting place is just big enough for Balleg to rest in.

Lair Actions

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

- Skeleton and zombie arms rise out of the ground in a 20-foot radius centered on a point that Balleg can see within 100 feet. The area becomes difficult terrain, and each creature there must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be restrained. A creature can end the restraint on itself or another creature within reach as an action with a successful DC 15 Strength check. The arms sink back into the ground when Balleg uses this lair action again, or when Balleg dies.
- Four wights rise, appearing in unoccupied spaces that Balleg can see within 100 feet. They act immediately and on initiative count 20 in subsequent rounds, and obey Balleg's telepathic commands. They remain until Balleg uses this action again. If Balleg dies, the wights become free-willed creatures.
- A wall of moaning, thrashing corpses springs into existence on a solid surface within 120 feet of Balleg. The wall is up to 60 feet long, 10 feet high, and 5 feet thick, and it blocks line of sight.

When the wall appears, each creature in its area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature that fails the save takes 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage and is pushed 5 feet out of the wall's space, appearing on whichever side of the wall it wants. A creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the wall must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Each 10-foot section of wall has AC 5, 15 hit points, resistance to piercing and bludgeoning damage, and immunity to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. The wall sinks back into the ground when Balleg uses this lair action again, or when Balleg dies.

Regional Effects

The region containing Balleg's lair is warped by its magic, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- Thick clouds shroud the area within one mile of the lair. Storms are common, and even during the day the ambient light is dim at best.
- Scavengers and carrion birds are common, and aggressive towards PCs within 5 miles of the lair.
- Creatures who sleep during a long rest within one mile of the lair must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted with Long-Term Madness (Page 201 SRD).

If Balleg dies, conditions of the area surrounding the lair return to normal over the course of 1d10 days.

The Corrupted

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d10 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +1

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

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

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces The Corrupted to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, The Corrupted drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Corrupted makes two claw attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.



KYNIKK, THE DEBAUCHED

LORE

The pathway between the Heavens and the Abyss is scorched with blood and the dead dreams of infants and madmen. Only the truly vile know the way safely. The rest must navigate a tunnel of uncertainty the leads into a boiling nest of hate and chaos.

What better way to spend a summer?

Kynikk has mastered this pathway between the living world and demonic plane from whence he was born. This pathway can be navigated by others, but an entire army of his worshipers is another thing. His goal, while living here, is to devise a way to open this pathway to the ravenous, feverish horde that serves him in the Abyss.

Not an easy task.

Kynikk is not subtle. He is not bound by laws that stop him from harming the human world. He brings pain and misery with him into the mortal realm, twisting humanity into his own playground. His fiends, the Vorakh, serve him in their own malevolent way. So long as they bring horror to others, Kynikk cares nothing for what they do.

Kynikk's ultimate goal is to turn the world into a horrid wasteland, one corner at a time.

Among his retinue are legions of Vorakh demons and a singular abyssal hag named Zeltameer. Zeltameer is not what one would call stable, but she appears to be more loyal to Kynikk than a demon normally would be. Together, this demon cadre is nearly unstoppable.

And if the PCs cannot defeat Kynikk, he will surely keep the gate open between his realm and ours.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

14th-16th level.

ENCOUNTER

Kynikk lives at the bottom of a shattered dungeon, hidden from the rest of the world. Living inside it are all manner of despicable beasts that have no place in the civilized world above. Here, Kynikk's acts go unnoticed. He is free from the intrusions of the outside world. Here, he can study the magicks required to open the pathways between good and evil. Kynikk's plans go undetected and unmolested.

How the PCs discover Kynikk is up to the Gamemaster. This can be an accidental encounter, and thus a short adventure, or part of a much larger mystery where his machinations have gained the attention of others—perhaps a priest or wizard has sensed his evil magic from afar. Since this is a high-level encounter, it would be a waste to just drop the PCs into this situation without some clues.

Ideally, find a high-level dungeon you like, change the background of the adventure slightly, and put Kynikk at the bottom of the dungeon, ready to unleash fury on the world.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Chaos, Discord, Hate

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

The closer to Kynikk the characters are, the more surreal the dungeon is. Unlike the hallucinations of The Cave Master (page 23), the environment they are witnessing is all too real. This makes it worse. What should be impossible (walking upside down in a fifth dimension, walls made of blood and teeth that scream, etc.) is possible here. Merely being in the presence of this chthonic horror should be enough to drive anyone mad—even high-level characters.

Wherever they are found, there is plenty of room to maneuver for the demons, albeit the group and lair actions of Kynikk may not be suited for humans.

The number of Vorakh encountered should be at least twice the number of PCs. But Gamemasters should tailor that total to the amount of magic items the PCs possess. There is never more than one Kynikk or Zeltameer.

TACTICS

Note: This encounter is big and nasty. It's meant to be a challenge and PCs may die here. There's a lot of moving parts, too. There's a lot for the Gamemaster to manage. Don't rush it, but don't drag your feet either.

And clean your room.

This encounter requires the understanding of three powerful creature types, plus the lair actions of the demons.

Kynikk is allowed one lair action each round of combat that does not count against his normal actions. The lair essentially comes alive with limbs, memory walls, or shadow demons. All of these are perfect nightmare fuel to unleash on the PCs. The limbs and walls are ideal for keeping the PCs at bay for a few rounds, so Kynikk and Zeltameer can use their ranged magic.

Kynikk's minions are also bashers. In combat, they are brutal machines that deal as much damage as possible each round. However, they have a number of tactics at their disposal for dispensing pain. One is to gang tackle opponents, like spell-casters, to render them ineffective. The other is to slow the movement of fighters and rogues by using their warping aura power. Once the enemy is at a safe distance, they can use Entropic Assault. If the gap closes, the Vorakhs surround one opponent, only spreading to others if they have to.

Vorakh's have two versions of the same power. Essentially, they can take on forms the PCs believe to be 'friends.' Fluid Visage is active and requires an action to use against the PCs.

KYNIKK, THE DEBAUCHED

The other, Face of a Friend, is passive and puts all attacks against the Vorakh at a disadvantage. Gamemasters looking for psychological torture for the PCs can drive home the madness of the encounter through this tactic as well.

Their most difficult opponents are rangers and anyone with ranged attacks. Leave it to Zeltameer to deal with those.

Zeltameer is a dangerous foe. She has a number of spells at her disposal, using *ray of enfeeblement* on the first spellcaster she sees, and *slow* on the biggest warrior. She saves *lightning bolt* and *telekinesis* for when she uses her Abyssal Challenge.

If the Abyssal Challenge is successful, she teleports to the Abyssal plane (with her victim) and uses her claws on the first round, followed by *telekinesis* and *lightning bolt* on subsequent rounds. If Zeltameer is unable to get in close to use her dagger, she saves *lightning bolt* for a surprise attack on a wounded enemy.

If the PCs never get close to her, Zeltameer casts *magic missile* (repeatedly) from a distance (up to 120 feet). While not adverse to coordinating her actions with the Vorakh, she's more concerned about Kynikk's survival.

Depending on the tactics of the PCs, she may cast *invisibility* on herself and then use the Abyssal Challenge dagger attack on the biggest warrior. She is smart and won't put herself in harm's way. If the battle is going poorly, she casts *plane shift* before letting the PCs kill her. She's loyal to Kynikk, but she's not stupid.

Kynikk is the most terrifying figure here. He has a number of magical powers, including the lair actions mentioned early. While he wants nothing more than to pound a brutish warrior or paladin into the ground, he uses surprisingly effective tactics to make sure the fight isn't fair.

Kynikk may cast *invisibility* on himself at will, indicating that he may already be invisible when the fight starts. PCs expecting a demon and some cohorts may be surprised to realize that Zeltameer is not the captain once Kynikk makes an appearance.

Kynikk may already have his *globe of invulnerability* up as well. But Gamemaster's should determine this based on the PCs' level and strengths. Otherwise, he casts it on the first round, followed by *blade barrier*.

Once the fighting starts, Kynikk casts *reverse gravity* on the PCs and *greater invisibility* on himself. He casts *power word stun* (up to 60 feet) on a cleric or wizard, if applicable, while still invisible.

Kynikk's favorite tactic is to summon a force cube (see Kynikk's Prison) onto a single character—summon a demon into the cube—and then turn the entire thing invisible so the occupants cannot even see their comrade being mauled to death. This tactic ensures the PC cannot coordinate with his comrades, even if the character somehow survives the fight.

Kynikk waits for the right moment to use this power. He wants to disrupt the PCs' plans and they will never see this combination coming. He even uses his *dispel magic* on something random (yet powerful) the PCs' cast, just to keep them guessing.

Finally, once Kynikk has abused the PCs enough, he engages in hand-to-hand combat, using his Draining Whip and longsword to subdue unruly PCs. If he is fighting one-on-two (or worse), he uses Teleport to appear near a PC spellcaster to finish them off instead.

Kynikk does not fear death. He is a powerful lord of the Abyss. While his body may be sundered, his debauched ideals manifest and survive. Nothing the PCs do can stop his kind from trying again in 66 years.

When Kynikk dies, he explodes in fire (Death Throes) igniting everything and everyone in a 30 foot radius.

Note: If all goes well, there are *seventeen* demons in this fight against a five-adventurer party, including the summoned shadow demons and Kynikk's Hezrou demon. That's a lot of balls in the air, with four different initiative scores to manage. Gamemasters need to prepare for this fight with more than just a casual glance at the stat blocks.

Make all of the abilities count. Teleporting characters and creatures all over the dungeon and into the Abyss, should make this a fight to remember.

SCALING

Start with twice the amount of Vorakh minions to PCs. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with Kynikk, reduce the number of his minions to one per character.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with Kynikk, allow him to use Kynikk's Prison twice. Have portions of the Abyss leak and overlap into the dungeon. The creatures they face would undoubtedly be more powerful, but also more numerous. This also means Kynikk is closer to finishing his ritual than previously thought.

TREASURE

The gate to the abyss closed, the only true treasure is saving the world. Zeltameer's dagger was forged by demon artisans, specifically for her hand. It works for no one else but her.



Kynikk the Debauched

Huge fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 262 (21d12 + 126)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	15 (+2)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +12, Wis +9, Cha +12

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

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Death Throes. When Kynikk dies, he explodes, and each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 70 (20d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The explosion ignites flammable objects in that area that aren't being worn or carried, and it destroys Kynikk's weapons.

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

Magic Weapons. Kynikk's weapon attacks are magical.

Innate Spellcasting. Kynikk's spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell Save DC 19). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect good and evil*, *invisibility* (self only)
3/day: *blade barrier*, *dispel magic*, *globe of invulnerability*
1/day: *greater invisibility*, *power word stun*, *reverse gravity*

Subversive Aura. At the start of each of Kynikk's turns, each creature within 5 feet of Kynikk must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed. While charmed in this way, the creature treats Kynikk as its closest ally, and obeys his commands. If given a command that will bring obvious harm to itself, the creature is no longer charmed. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Kynikk's Prison. 1/day: Kynikk casts *forcecage*, requiring no material components. When the *forcecage* appears, a Hezrou demon is summoned at the same time, appearing within the area immediately. The Hezrou attacks any creature trapped in the same invisible cube-shaped prison. If the Hezrou is defeated, the *forcecage* remains active until the spell effect ends.

Additionally, Kynikk's Prison immediately makes everything inside invisible every other round. Only sounds can be heard from within when the prison and contents are invisible. This is more of a psychological effect where victims inside the cage can only be seen every other round.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kynikk makes two attacks: one with his longsword and one with his whip.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) slashing damage plus 13 (3d8) lightning damage. If Kynikk scores a critical hit, roll damage dice three times, instead of twice.

Draining Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) psychic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be pulled up to 25 feet toward Kynikk. Additionally, the target's Wisdom is reduced by one. When the target finishes a long rest, it regains one point of lost Wisdom. If a creature is reduced to 0 Wisdom, the target is stunned until 1 point is restored.

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

KYNIKK'S LAIR

Kynikk's lair is a visual abomination of horrors that is a perfect home for any demon. A pocket dimension that exhibits the vile nature of the Abyss. Stale air and a corrupted stench greet the PCs in this suffocating environment.

Lair Actions

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

- Various arms and twisted torsos with tortured faces rise out of the ground in a 20-foot radius centered on a point that Kynikk can see within 100 feet. The area becomes difficult terrain, and each creature there must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be restrained. A creature can end the restraint on itself or another creature within reach as an action with a successful DC 15 Strength check. The distorted body parts sink back into the ground when Kynikk uses this lair action again, or when he dies.
- Four Shadow Demons rise, appearing in unoccupied spaces that Kynikk can see within 100 feet. They act immediately and on initiative count 20 on subsequent rounds, obeying Kynikk's telepathic commands. They remain until Kynikk uses this action again. If he dies, the Shadow Demons become free-willed creatures.
- A wall of blurred and nightmarish memories from the PCs' imagination springs into existence on a solid surface within 120 feet of Kynikk. The nightmare wall is up to 60 feet long, 10 feet high, and 5 feet thick, and it blocks line of sight.

When the nightmare wall appears, each creature in its area must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. A creature that fails the save takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage and is pushed 5 feet out of the wall's space, appearing on whichever side of the wall it wants. A creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the wall must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 18 (4d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Each 10-foot section of wall has AC 5, 15 hit points, resistance to piercing and bludgeoning damage, and immunity to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. The wall sinks back into the ground when Kynikk uses this lair action again, or when Kynikk dies.

Regional Effects

There are no regional effects as the Abyssal pocket dimension is still in the process of forming.

Zeltameer the Abyssal Hag

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 134 (17d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Zeltameer's innate spell casting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2/day: *invisibility*, *plane shift*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*, *slow*

1/day: *lightning bolt*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *telekinesis*

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

Magic Weapons. Zeltameer's weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Zeltameer makes two attacks: two with her claws, or dagger.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Etherealness. Zeltameer magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Abyssal Challenge (1/day). On a successful melee attack with her dagger, Zeltameer teleports to a featureless area of the Abyss, along with the creature she stabbed, up to 1d6 rounds. Any equipment worn by the stabbed creature drops to the ground. No equipment is transported to the Abyss and no other creatures are present, other than Zeltameer. She immediately attacks the creature with her claws on her next turn.

If the creature, or Zeltameer dies, the effect ends, instantly returning the survivor to the unoccupied space where they originally teleported from. If both the creature and Zeltameer are alive at the end of the 1d6 rounds, both Zeltameer and the stabbed creature instantly return to the unoccupied space where they originally teleported from.

Vorakh

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 157 (13d10 + 75)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +9, Wis +7, Cha +9

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +6

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

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Fluid Visage. The Vorakh is hidden by a magical illusion. Creatures see the Vorakh as a creature of great beauty, or one worthy of respect. As an action, the Vorakh can target a creature within 120 feet that it can see, and take on the form of creature known to its target that fits those criteria. A creature can see through the illusion if it takes an action to inspect the Vorakh and succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Demons are immune to this feature.

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

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

Warping Aura. The area within 30 feet of the Vorakh magically becomes difficult terrain. The Vorakh can suppress this ability and can resume it during any subsequent turn, with both being a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Makes two attacks with its entropic assault, or two attacks with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage, and the target is pulled 5 feet closer to the Vorakh.

Entropic Assault. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) psychic damage, and if the target is a creature it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

REACTIONS

Face of a Friend. When a creature the Vorakh can see targets it with an attack, the Vorakh takes on the image of a creature the attacker cares for. The attack has disadvantage. A creature that can't be charmed is immune to this ability.

THE COLOSSUS OF CHARNAX

LORE

Charnax was originally a city founded by powerful mages to practice their magic away from the eyes of the rest of the world. At one time the city was a peaceful place. It is blighted and blasted beyond all recognition; now, even the undead do not dare to roam.

The undoing of Charnax was the hubris of a group of spellcasters; eagerly they delved into the mysteries of life, creating their own simulacrum. It lived and grew hungry. The flesh-golem is bound to the city of Charnax, the last dying breath of those who sought to keep it contained. Over the centuries the Colossus has grown and changed, testing the weaknesses of its cage.

The flesh-golem of Charnax contains hundreds, if not thousands, of bodies of those it has consumed. Its shape is that of a multi-armed human, but upon closer inspection it is that of writhing bodies in various states of waxen decay. When standing, it towers over 100 feet, its hands eagerly seeking out the living for it to add to its own form.

Adventurers foolish enough to come close to it, will find themselves gripped by the limbs of its previous victims, and they will be exhorted to join in the golem's concordance. If that wasn't horrific enough, the flesh-golem can vomit from its body lesser flesh-golems made up of the bodies of its victims. These flesh-golems will eagerly be subsumed back into the host once their task is finished.

Adventurers seek out Charnax for the treasures still held in the city, for the magical objects said to be hidden amongst its flesh-bodies, or even to save a companion that is now a part of this fearsome creature.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

16th-18th level.

ENCOUNTER

Charnax is the largest creature the PCs will likely ever encounter. There should be hundreds of amazing rumors and plot hooks leading them to this moment. This is the kind of thing that a campaign culminates with. It should not be wasted on a side-quest. When they finally encounter the fabled city, Charnax's stature should be noticeable from miles away, resting upon its structure like a giant king in a massive throne.

INITIAL ATTITUDE

An air of uncomfortable silence. Unease.

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Charnax is a titan. He cannot surprise the PCs. Even if he is hiding under the earth, it takes him a while to wake. Should the PCs encounter him in some kind of earthquake scenario, they should suffer damage (per the *earthquake* spell) before the fight begins. Charnax cannot be reasoned with. He has no interest in parlay.

TACTICS

There is little in the way of tactics for a creature that takes up the entire battlefield. Charnax attacks whatever is closest, batters it until it is subdued, and continues for another two rounds just to be sure. He then continues to the next enemy, and so on.

His three additional powers beyond smashing the PCs is to absorb them into his flesh, stomp the ground—which creates a shockwave and knocks targets to the ground—and vomit flesh, which recharges periodically, while also creating his minion Flesh Fragments.

Additionally, his Flesh Fragments can occupy PCs who would otherwise be attempting to chip away at Charnax's flesh. The minion Flesh Fragments are not tactical and can be treated as very strong zombies (that are not undead) with high hit points. They simply attack the closest PC using their own slam attacks. Occupied PCs risk being slammed by Charnax, or even absorbed into his massive body.

Charnax is an unstoppable killing machine and he should be treated as such. PCs that try to go toe-to-toe with him, will likely lose. He is probably the most frightful thing they've ever dealt with.

SCALING

Start with four Flesh Fragments. To decrease the difficulty of encounters with Charnax, allow his Vomit Flesh power to only recharge on a 6.

To increase the difficulty of encounters with Charnax, raise his Legendary Resistance to five times per day.

TREASURE

Beyond measure. So many have died fighting him, he's a walking magic shop, if the PCs can sift through it all. Consider spending an entire session search through the rubble, examining Charnax's path of destruction. At about the three-quarter mark of the session, allow the PCs to discover the crown jewel of their search—a fabled staff or some holy artifact. Whatever you deem appropriate.



The Colossus of Charnax

Gargantuan construct (titan), neutral

Armor Class 25 (natural armor)

Hit Points 537 (25d20 + 250)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	9 (-1)	30 (+10)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +8, Cha +9

Damage Immunities lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands the languages of its creators but can't speak

Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

Grasping Limbs. A creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the Colossus must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or be grappled (escape DC 20). When the colossus moves while grappling any Large or smaller creatures in this way, the Colossus can drag the grappled creatures at full speed instead of half.

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

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

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

Magic Weapons. The Colossus' weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. The Colossus regains 50 hit points at the start of its turn as long as it has at least 1 hit point.

Unstoppable. The Colossus takes half damage from attacks and spells from creature smaller than Huge. Creatures with the siege monster trait ignore this feature with their weapon attacks.

Siege Monster. The Colossus deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Colossus uses its Frightful Presence or Vomit Flesh. It then makes four attacks: two with its Slam, two with its Stomp. It can use its Absorb in place of one Slam.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (4d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +19 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 31 (4d10 + 10) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the Colossus' choice that is within 120 feet of it and aware of it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become Frightened for 1 minute. A creature 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 Colossus' Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Vomit Flesh (Recharge 5–6). The Colossus vomits a great mass of its own body at a point it can see within 200 feet. Each creature within 30 feet of that point must succeed on a DC 27 Dexterity saving throw or take 33 (6d10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone, or half as much damage and isn't knocked prone on a success. A *Flesh Fragment* pools together and appears in the closest unoccupied space to the point of origin.

Absorb. The Colossus makes a Slam attack against a Large or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits the target takes the Slam's damage, the target is absorbed into the Colossus, and the grapple ends. While absorbed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the Colossus, and it takes 56 (16d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the Colossus' turns.

If the Colossus takes 60 hit points of damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the Colossus must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or expel all absorbed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the Colossus. If the Colossus dies, an absorbed creature is no longer restrained by it, and can escape from the corpse by using 30 feet of movement, exiting prone.

If a creature dies while absorbed, the Colossus adds the creature's body to its own mass and regains 20 hit points.

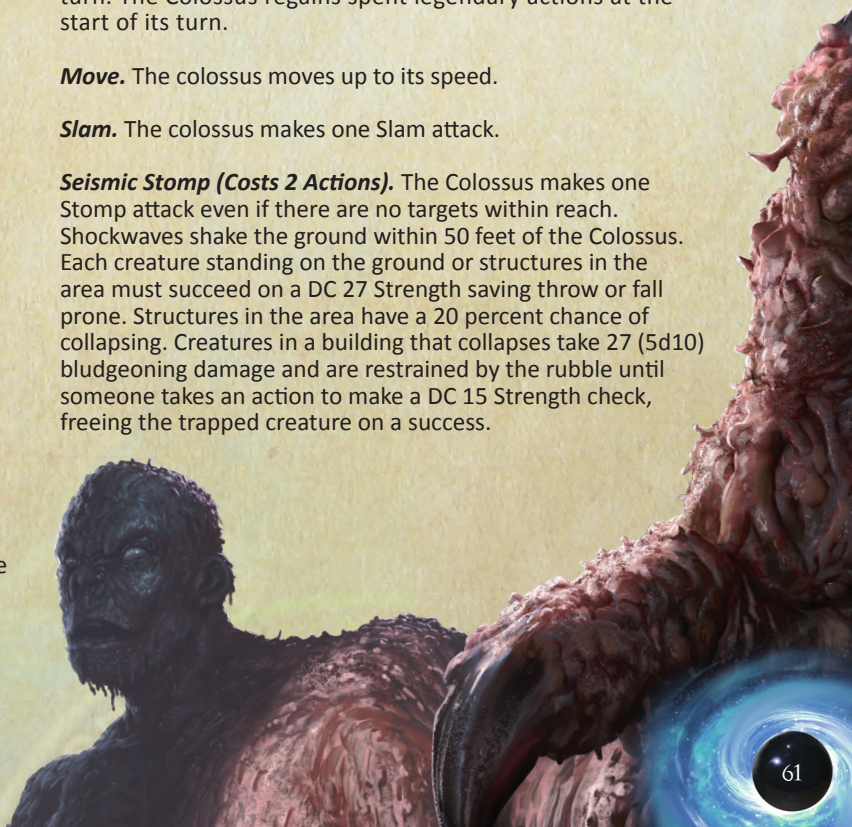
LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Move. The colossus moves up to its speed.

Slam. The colossus makes one Slam attack.

Seismic Stomp (Costs 2 Actions). The Colossus makes one Stomp attack even if there are no targets within reach. Shockwaves shake the ground within 50 feet of the Colossus. Each creature standing on the ground or structures in the area must succeed on a DC 27 Strength saving throw or fall prone. Structures in the area have a 20 percent chance of collapsing. Creatures in a building that collapses take 27 (5d10) bludgeoning damage and are restrained by the rubble until someone takes an action to make a DC 15 Strength check, freeing the trapped creature on a success.



Flesh Fragment

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d10 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

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

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

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fragment makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

NEZZEROTH, THE UNDYING

LORE

Nezzeroth is a different kind of villain. His life began as an adventurer. In fact, he'd amassed a cadre of friends and a small fortune. Any problem he wanted to solve could be done with a single thought. His magical power was so great, he even established a small town—a utopia from suffering, so long as the inhabitants helped him gather books and knowledge.

And for years the town prospered.

As time passed, Nezzeroth's library grew to encompass most of the town. Each time people brought him books, he enlisted carpenters to build more shelves and buildings. The libraries became villages unto themselves and the town grew beyond his managing. He couldn't keep up with who was coming or going.

Eventually the stress grew and Nezzeroth realized he would never live long enough to read all the information he'd gathered. Whatever good he wished to do for humanity, it would take several lifetimes to accomplish. In his despondency, he overreacted and teleported all of the books into a nearby mine and shut himself off from the world.

The town was baffled. No one knew where Nezzeroth went and their tiny utopia fractured without his guidance. People turned on one another and eventually the once great community became a ghost town. Over the years, goblins, orcs, and all manner of beasts would make it their home, but never for too long.

All the while, Nezzeroth used his power to secure a new stronghold for himself. Deep inside an old mine, he transformed the chambers into laboratories, libraries, and living quarters. He spent nearly a year getting everything perfect before beginning his next quest: immortality.

At the age of 50, Nezzeroth was just getting started with his research. While other wizards were retiring, Nezzeroth started his ultimate quest: To master all the knowledge of the world. To do this, he needed two things: the ability to live forever, and a duplicate of himself—someone who understood his ideals and motives. Someone he could trust.

So began the quest to create a living clone of himself. But Nezzeroth didn't *just* create one clone. He created nine. Nine near-perfect versions of himself that he defined as *molts*; molts grown from his own consciousness and power. Each molt was like Nezzeroth in every way. All of them geniuses. All of them idealists. All of them dedicated to understanding all magic.

But the molts weren't perfect. None lived for more than a few years. And for reasons he never understood, no more than nine could be alive at once. But whenever a molt died, Nezzeroth created a replacement.

Four years after Nezzeroth's disappearance, he returned to the world. One of his molts, appearing as Nezzeroth, came before a council of wizards, offering aid in exchange for magical knowledge. Another molt appeared before a

king, offering counsel in exchange for magic. Everywhere around the world, molts of Nezzeroth appeared, trading guidance and help for access to their libraries. All the while, Nezzeroth and a pair of molts worked in his library translating every written word so the world could understand what he understood.

For decades, Nezzeroth dispatched his molts (who lived a mere 10 years each) to every corner of the globe in search of knowledge. And for decades, Nezzeroth grew in power, transcribing and transcribing. Nezzeroth could see a light at the end of the tunnel—a mastery of all the magic that every existed.

What Nezzeroth didn't know, and couldn't understand, is that he wasn't studying magic, but erasing magic. Every time one of his molts transcribed a scroll or studied a book, the language of that spell was replaced by a new 'mastered' version of the spell, in Nezzeroth's unique language. As molts exited libraries with scrolls, they took with them the last remaining language for communing with the plane of magic. Without intending to, Nezzeroth became the gatekeeper of nearly every spell in existence.

While Nezzeroth's capacity to memorize and retain everything he read seemed like a gift, it was a thorn to the world. But because no one knew where he was (nor that he was the source of the scourge), no one could stop what they didn't understand.

This went on for nearly a century. Old magical spells no longer worked. The one hundred or so remaining spells that the world knew to exist still sat outside Nezzeroth's reach. Until one day, a spell as simple as *fly* or *magic missile* or even *web* was no longer possible.

Now, residue from a far-away mountain points to the cause of magic's 'decline.' But it can only be felt by the most powerful wizards and sorcerers. It is not clear what is causing magic to fade, but it *clearly* must be stopped before it's too late, and all magic is gone for good.

SUGGESTED PC LEVELS

18th-20th level.

ENCOUNTER

Nezzeroth is always found in his lair, at work, studying and mastering everything around him. His knowledge of magic is beyond compare; his library a city unto itself. His molts (at various stages of aging) are always close at hand. They too are geniuses, albeit not as bright as the present Nezzeroth. But bright enough to aid him in his work.

His lair is a maze of tunnels, designed to confound and trap any who would dare enter his sanctum.



NEZZEROTH THE UNDYING

INITIAL ATTITUDE

Crackling with Power, Enigmatic, Overconfident

ENCOUNTER CONDITIONS

Depending on how the PCs approach the situation, the conditions are different. Nezzeroth is the smartest person in the world. Even if this isn't true, he believes it. No cajoling or discussion can convince him that he is 'erasing' magic, when he knows for a fact that he's *preserving* magic.

He is unlikely to meet directly with anyone, sending a molt first to negotiate.

He knows people are coming, long before they arrive. There is absolutely no way to surprise him or catch him off guard.

TACTICS

This can be a highly challenging encounter or mini-campaign, wherein the PCs may not be successful. However, if they aren't successful, the world will likely change irrevocably. The PCs want to succeed, but the Gamemaster needs to challenge them. Nezzeroth is too great a foe to die in just a few rounds. The battle needs to ebb and flow, with the PCs experiencing his full complement of powers.

Big wizard battles are not easy to conduct. Often, the enemy wizard is one against many. A single attack from a high-level fighter can take out a wizard in one round. Nezzeroth needs to keep the molts between him and the PCs. The molts immediately cast *false life*, *mage armor*, and *foresight* in that order—and ahead of time—if they can prepare for the PC's arrival.

Regardless, Nezzeroth is ready for the PCs before they arrive. A number of his spells are already cast (marked with *) before the battle starts.

If there is a battle.

Certainly the PCs can attempt to convince Nezzeroth that what he's doing is wrong. He's not evil, but he's not likely to listen to strangers, either. Gamemasters interested in a non-violent end to this story are welcome to roleplay it out. There are no particular guidelines for this. Merely allow Nezzeroth to think several hundred steps ahead of the PCs and you've got it.

Otherwise, if there is a fight, Nezzeroth needs to use powerful magic early. Anything that slows the PCs down or deals the greatest amount of damage should come first. Spells like *cone of cold*, *feblemind*, *finger of death*, *forcecage*, *maze*, and *wall of force* are ideal early on. He will save his *meteor swarm* for late in the battle or if the battle moves outside. He also has a Staff of Magi with 40 charges, which provide access to many other spells.

If the PCs get too close too soon, he casts *mirror image* and instructs the molts closer to him as a line of defense. He also casts *teleport* on himself to keep people away from him, or to help him escape. He will not fight to the death under any circumstance.

If pursued, he uses *plane shift* from his staff to guarantee his escape to another plane of existence.

Any magic items such as scrolls, or spell books within 10 feet of a molt are susceptible to their Contagious Encryption. Molts fight to the death if they are within visual range of Nezzeroth. If not, they flee when reduced to 40 hit points or fewer.

SCALING

Whenever it seems like the PCs might win too soon, have another molt appear. Note: There are nine total molts available if need be.

If it seems as though the PCs are going to die, have Nezzeroth escape with as much research as he can carry.

TREASURE

Nezzeroth's treasure trove is hundreds of years old. If an item did not possess some immediate use or wasn't a good addition to his library, it was thrown out. PCs should discover countless spells they've never heard of and refined versions of spells they know. After Nezzeroth's death, all his ciphers unscramble and surely release a lot of magic back into the world.





Nezzeroth the Undying

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (18 with mage armor)

Hit Points 256 (27d8 + 135) (266 with false life)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	25 (+7)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +11, Int +13, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +13, History +13, Religion +13, Perception +9

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages any six languages

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). When Nezzeroth fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Shed Mortality. Nezzeroth suffers none of the frailty of old age, can't be aged magically, and doesn't die of old age.

Special Equipment. Nezzeroth carries a *staff of the magi* (40 charges) and *bracers of defense*. While he holds his staff, he has advantage on saving throws against spells.

Spell Savant. When Nezzeroth casts a spell that has an area effect, he can exclude any number of friendly creatures from the spell's area effect. Excluded creatures suffer no effects of the spell.

Spellcasting. Nezzeroth is a 20th level spellcaster. Intelligence is his spellcasting ability (spell save DC 21, +15 to hit with spell attacks). Nezzeroth has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *fire bolt*, *light*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*
1st level (5 slots): *false life**, *mage armor**, *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant*
2nd level (4 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *shatter*
3rd level (4 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*
4th level (4 slots): *banishment*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*
5th level (4 slots): *cone of cold*, *telekinesis*, *teleportation circle*, *wall of force*
6th level (3 slots): *circle of death*, *contingency**, *disintegrate*
7th level (3 slots): *finger of death*, *forcecage*
8th level (2 slots): *feebleshield*, *maze*
9th level (2 slots): *foresight**, *meteor swarm*

*Nezzeroth casts these spells on himself prior to combat.

ACTIONS

Staff of the Magi. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

REACTIONS

Spell Absorption. While holding the *Staff of the Magi*, Nezzeroth can absorb a cast spell that targets only him. The staff absorbs the spell, cancelling its effects and gaining a number of charges equal to the absorbed spell's level. However, if doing so brings the staff's total number of charge above 50, the staff explodes as if Nezzeroth activated its *Retributive Strike* (page 244 SRD).

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Nezzeroth can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Nezzeroth regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Cantrip. Nezzeroth casts a cantrip.

Teleport. Nezzeroth teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

Recall. Nezzeroth regains an expended spell slot. The recovered spell slot must be 5th level or lower.

Disrupt Time (Costs 2 Actions). Nezzeroth targets a creature he can see within 60 feet. The creature is knocked partially out of the flow of time. Until the end of Nezzeroth's next turn, the creature moves at half speed. The creature can take an action, or bonus action—but not both—and can't make more than one attack during its action regardless of spells, features, or magic items.



Molt

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (16 with mage armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d8 + 42) (115 with false life)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	24 (+7)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Int +10, Wis +8

Skills Arcana +9, History +9, Religion +8, Perception +8

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages speaks the languages spoken by Nezzeroth

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Contagious Encryption. Unattended written works within 10 feet of the molt become permanently scrambled with an unintelligible cipher. The molt and Nezzeroth can read the encrypted writing the same as any other normal language. Any other creature cannot read the writing by any means short of a *wish* spell. After 1 hour, the caster of the wish must succeed on a DC 19 spellcasting ability check, or the writing reverts to the cipher.

A creature carrying writing that starts its turn within 10 feet of a cipher must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw, or one piece of writing such as a book or scroll in its possession becomes encrypted as above.

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

Spellcasting. The molt is an 18th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). The molt has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *fire bolt*, *light*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *false life**, *mage armor**, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *shatter*

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

4th level (3 slots): *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*

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

teleportation circle, *wall of force*

6th level (1 slots): *circle of death*, *disintegrate*

7th level (1 slots): *finger of death*, *forcecage*

8th level (1 slots): *feeblemind*, *maze*

9th level (1 slots): *foresight**

* The molt casts these spells on itself before combat.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.



Kyrtelmuk the Intelligent

by David Adams

Born with gray-blue skin and a keen mind, Kyrtelmuk should have been an outcast among her kin. Instead, she found that with but a thought she could force the goblins around her to obey her every whim. With an entire goblin tribe at her command, Kyrtelmuk set out to expand and refine her knowledge. She took particular interest in the activities of many nearby cities and decided that she would forge a goblin empire, emulating the lives of those she witnessed while skulking in alleys.

She now holds three more tribes in her telepathic sway, forcing them to mindlessly carry out empty pantomimes of city life in a feeble attempt to forge a lasting empire. Goblins shamle down poorly cobbled "streets," seeming to exchange bits of trinket for rotting vegetables. Others pace along ramshackle fortifications, hefting crude swords and wearing ill-fitting helms. In light of these accomplishments, Kyrtelmuk has begun traveling to neighboring kingdoms demanding that they recognize the sovereignty of this goblin empire... and she secretly fumes and plots war with every laughing dismissal her envoy has been met with.

Tactics

Kyrtelmuk prefers to avoid fights whenever she can, but makes sure that she is constantly surrounded by an entourage of half a dozen goblin bosses that are under her telepathic control - and often has a dozen or more lesser goblins following her as she visits her "kingdom." She commands these goblins telepathically, lashing them with psionic energy to push them forward in battle and forcing them to jump in front of swords that are about to strike her. When under assault by more threatening foes, Kyrtelmuk attempts to dominate the most dim-witted or muscular enemy that she can see, turning these creatures against their companions. If they seem useful, she might see fit to keep such creatures as thralls, though her control over these minions is not as steadfast as her power over other goblins.

Summary

Kyrtelmuk is a highly intelligent, cunning goblin. She is a creature who runs against the expectations that the world holds about goblins. Her psionic power is formidable, and Given enough time, she might truly be able to bring enough goblins under her control to pose a serious threat to neighboring kingdoms.

Kyrtelmuk the Intelligent

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 71

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +4

Skills Stealth +6

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Goblin, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 5

Ego Whip. One goblin within 60 feet that Kyrtelmuk can see takes 3 psychic damage and makes a melee weapon attack against a creature within reach.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). Kyrtelmuk's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

At will: *friends*, *vicious mockery*

1/day: *crown of madness*, *detect thoughts*, *dominate person*

2/day: *charm Person*, *hold person*, *sleep*

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

Save Me! (Recharges 5 - 6). When Kyrtelmuk is targeted by a melee weapon attack, she can use her reaction to redirect the attack to an adjacent goblin.

ACTIONS

Id Assault. Kyrtelmuk telepathically assails the mind of one creature within 60 feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or take 13 (2d6) psychic damage, or half as much on a successful save. Creatures that fail the saving throw can't use their reactions until the end of their next turn.

Spear. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) piercing damage.

Mindless Goblin

by David Adams

Mindless goblins like this one follow Kyrtemuk unswervingly, for they are subdued by her telepathic commands. Other, weaker goblins also dwell among the tribes that she controls, but the mindless goblins are her most trusted followers given their skill in combat.

Mindless Goblin

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 71

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Nimble Escape. The goblin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The goblin makes two attacks with its shortsword. The second attack has disadvantage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Cultist of The Lady

by Lucas Vander Wal

In a cold and harsh world, there are many reasons to pledge allegiance to the The Lady, the provider of security and comfort. She demands sacrifice, but blood is a small price to pay for the acceptance of a gracious master. It's hard to remember life before the journey up the mountain, but there's no reason to dwell on past full of rejection.

Cultist of The Lady

Medium humanoid (human), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 16 (with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 40 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (-0)	12 (+1)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Defend The Lady. As a bonus action, the cultist can move an additional 10 feet without provoking an opportunity attack. This can only be used to move towards Jesset Woebringer.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft or 20/60 ft (range), one target. *Hit:* 1d4 + 2 piercing damage.

Draining Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and the cultist regains a number of hit points equal to half the amount of necrotic damage dealt.

Spellcasting. The cultist's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +3 to hit with spell attacks).

The cultist can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

At will: *mage armor* (self only)

Jeset Woebringer

by Lucas Vander Wal

Jeset Woebringer, a gray skinned, red eyed sorceress, is the mysterious leader of the *Cult of The Lady*. Her followers believe her to be more than human, and for good reason. She exhibits many vampiric traits, possessing a magnetic personality. Whether she is actually a vampire or not is a common topic of debate, but most believe she is not because of her ability to stay in the sun and her consumption of regular food and drink.

The few members of her inner circle know the truth: she was born with magical affinity, and was granted even more powers through the patronage of an Ancient Vampire Lord. While watching her mother hang for 'harboring a witch', she felt a connection in her mind. As she struggled and screamed, she received the knowledge and power to break free of her binds, yet not in time to save her mother. She then unleashed the newfound magic, then killed a few of her captors before fleeing into the forest.

Through this dark tutelage, Jeset quickly learned how to sway followers to her cause. Using her natural wit and charm, she enchanted them while at the same time demanding sacrifice. From her home established atop a high mountain peak, she advertises a pilgrimage to find truth and beauty. The trip leaves all but the strongest of souls utterly exhausted and ready to accept her gift when they reach the top.

Tactics

Jeset uses her cultists as a first line of defense, both as an entry to the cult, and in any combat that may ensue. She purposely keeps six members of her inner circle close as a resource for her Drain Life ability. Her followers are so devoted that they will not hesitate to put themselves in harms way for her.

Most of her followers are not skilled in melee combat. However, many of them have picked up a few spells such as *mage armor* and a lesser version of *vampiric touch*, making them more difficult to kill and resilient in battle.

Summary

By controlling the blood of her allies and enemies, Jeset is a unique brand of spellcaster. She mimics the attributes and abilities of vampires without actually being undead. Though she is the leader of a cult, she also serves a greater master: her Ancient Vampire patron. Although she is a capable threat in battle, Jeset prefers to woo and deceive PCs until there are no other options but to fight.

Jeset Woebringer

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 88 (12d8 +24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +6

Senses Passive Perception 11, Darkvision 30 ft.

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft or 20/60 ft (range), one target. *Hit:* 1d4 +3 piercing damage.

Spellcasting (DC 15, +7 to hit):

Innate, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *mage armor (self only)*, *speak with dead*, **blood boil*. 1/day: *invisibility*

Warlock, 4 slots/day (5th level):

Cantrips: *eldritch blast*, *minor illusion*

Level 1-5: *charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *darkness*, *enthrall*, *vampiric touch*, *scrying*

Blood Boil. Jeset forcibly draws blood from an enemy. She makes a *ranged spell attack* (30 ft.) on a target she can see, dealing 4d6 necrotic damage on a hit, and gains the same amount in temporary hit points. This only affects living creatures with blood. The hit point reduction lasts until the target finishes a Long Rest or is healed.

Drain Life. Jeset touches a willing creature. The creature takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Jeset regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target's hit points can't be reduced below 1.

Ardi'Tik'Chok

by Uzair Quraishi

Like most barghests Ardi'Tik'Chok was born with goblin parents and wasn't aware of his true nature. In his early childhood he was plagued with dreams filled with death and destruction, but unlike other goblins who dreamt of conquest for their tribe Ardi'Tik'Chok found he dreamt of his *own* tribes destruction. The dreams plagued him and he lashed out at those around him, seeing the sheer ferocity, he possessed Vart (the tribe warchief) to assign Ardi'Tik'Chok to the raiding parties. This position satiated his aggressive behavior.

Ardi'Tik'Chok's dreams became more powerful and he dreamt that he single-handedly slaughtered the large raiding party. Not weak or pathetic goblins, but the strongest and fiercest of his tribe. Slashing through their internal organs with his claws or biting through their jugular like a savage beast.

Ardi'Tik'Chok woke from this dream drenched in blood. He found he was drenched in the blood of the broken bodies of his comrades surrounding him. While he looked upon the bodies in their varied states of destruction, he began to feel a hunger.

At that moment Ardi'Tik'Chok heard a demonic laughter ringing around him and a voice spoke. The voice identified himself as a General of Gehenna and revealed to Ardi'Tik'Chok his barghest nature. The general was immensely impressed at his accomplishments. Most barghest devour 17 souls to return to Gehenna in service of the General, but Arti'Tik'Chok devoured ten times that amount. The General decreed that Ardi'Tik'Chok remain on the Prime Material Plane as his Avatar of Destruction, continuing to devour souls, raise an army and do his biddings. The General also bestowed a dark blessing upon Ardi'Tik'Chok making him bigger, stronger and more powerful in his goblin-form.

During his travels, he met another devilish creature of the night. Through Isidora's Night Hag talents, he subverted the most pious and brought great delight to his master in the Nine Hells.

For the next thirty years, Arti'Tik'Chok devoured countless souls. Those that did not bend their knees to his will were either consumed or given to Isidora as a plaything. The ones that submitted to him were added to his growing army.

Currently his army is over 1000 strong and resides in a mountain pass, compromising of goblins, bugbears, ogres and hobgoblins. The mountain pass is the main trade route between the human, elven and dwarven kingdoms. Arti'Tik'Chok's position has greatly impeded the trade routes and the treacherous terrain makes it impossible for large armies to thwart Arti'Tik'Chok.

Even though Arti'Tik'Chok despises goblins, he finds them useful as fodder. The real muscle of the army comes from the numerous bugbears while the hobgoblins are able commanders and lead efficiently. Recently Arti'Tik'Chok subjugated a tribe of ogres and the stupid brutes add even more muscle to his army. His army is commanded by a hobgoblin warlock named Klemm Mudruth.

Besides his army, Arti'Tik'Chok also has 4 personal guards. A pair of 4-armed trolls and a pair of cyclops. His faithful mount is a chimera. Thought to be impossible, he was able to successfully tame the beast and heed his commands.

Tactics

Knowing that his army is smaller Arti'Tik'Chok uses guerrilla warfare to raid the nearby settlements and withering down the forces of good.

If someone were to penetrate into the mountain pass Arti'Tik'Chok uses goblins to test out the PC's strength. If by chance they can get close enough to Arti'Tik'Chok, there are his 4 loyal guards which crush most resistance (two 4-armed trolls and two cyclops). If they are able to pass through that, then Isidora is dispatched.

Depending on how Arti'Tik'Chok views the intruders he'll fly on his faithful pet and finish off the intruders from afar, but if he believes they are worthy, he'll have the urge to fight them head on so he can break and devour their souls.

Summary

Arti'Tik'Chok is believed to be a creature of chaos, but this master is actually also a minion to a more powerful being from the Nine Hells. He is always thought to be an extremely powerful goblin, but he is actually a barghest. The only one who knows his true nature is Isidora. All his other minions see him as a smarter, stronger and more powerful goblin.

Isidora, the Night Hag

Isidora is like most night hags who enjoys corrupting virtuous individuals into creatures of darkness. She revels in corrupting mortals.

Isidora takes multiple shapes and whatever fits the situation. Often she appears as a dashing damsel in distress, only to draw unsuspecting "saviors" into Arti'Tik'Chok's grasp.

Ardi'Tik'Chok

Large fiend (shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+0)	15 (+3)	14 (+1)	16 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +5, Cha +4

Skills Deception +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +5, Stealth +4

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

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Abyssal, Common, Goblin, Infernal, Telepathy 60ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Shapechanger. Ardi'Tik'Chok can use its action to polymorph into a large goblin or back into its true form. Other than its size and speed, its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Innate Spellcasting. Ardi'Tik'Chok's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *levitate*, *minor illusion*, *pass without trace*
3/day each: *charm person*, *dimension door*, *suggestion*
1/day each: *confusion*, *counterspell*, *fear*, *fireball*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ardi'Tik'Chok makes one bite and two claw attacks (true form only) or three attacks (goblin form)

Bite (true form only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (3d8 + 5) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 5 (2d4) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns due to a fiendish wound. Each time Ardi'Tik-Chok hits the wounded target with this attack, the damage dealt by the wound increases by 5 (2d4). Any creature can take an action to stanch the wound with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing.

Claw (true form only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d12 + 5) slashing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Isidora, the Night Hag

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 134

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +5, Cha +6

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that are not silvered

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following Spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *magic missile*
2/day each: *plane shift (self only)*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*

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

ACTIONS

Claws. (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Change Shape. The hag magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Etherealness. The hag magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, the hag must have a heartstone in her possession.

Nightmare Haunting (1/Day). While on the Ethereal Plane, the hag magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a magic circle. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies. If the target was evil, its soul is trapped in the hag's soul bag. The reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until removed by the *greater restoration* spell or similar magic.

Labyrinth of Isidora (1/day). Isadora can banish up to two creatures that she can see, along with her minotaur champion, into a labyrinth Demiplane for up to 10 minutes, as per the *maze* spell. The targets must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or be banished into the labyrinth Demiplane. The target remains there until the spell ends, at which point the target reappears in the space it left or in the nearest unoccupied space if that space is occupied.



MINION TACTICS

Tips and strategies are provided for each minion type below.

- Minions featured are Neutral to Evil Alignments, as most PCs will lean towards Neutral to Good.
- These minions may work effectively in groups.
- The minions listed can understand language, and follow a leader's directions and influence.

Azer

Minions of fire giants, or slaves of Efreeti

Frequency: 1-4

Setting: Deep mountain forge, or fortresses made of bronze on the Elemental Plane of Fire

Senses: passive Perception 11

Size: Medium (5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Natives of the Elemental Plane of Fire, Azers are Lawful Neutral, following their own moral code, or are following the code of an empire. Once summoned, or tasked by a Master, they will not seek out conflict, unless it is impeding their task.

Azers are technically an elemental and are sworn foes of Efreeti. They are crafted by one another and do not breed. Azer dwell between Elemental Plane of Fire and Earth and are masterful artisans called upon to forge elaborate magic items or works of art.

Tactics: An Azer has Heated Body, where attacks inflict 5 (1d10) additional fire damage. Leverage this as well as their Heated Weapons which add an additional 3 (1d6) fire damage.

An Azer ignites any flammable items within five feet of them.

Four Azers can effectively surround a group of PCs. Any PC moving out of the combat area would be subject to attack of opportunities, suffering additional fire damage.

Consider having nearby fire pits in the floor, perhaps for helping forge items, forcing PCs to choose a less painful direction. The idea is to "make them sweat" and be extremely uncomfortable.

Non-combat resolution: Slave, or mind controlled Azers would be a potential use by Efreeti. Perhaps an Azer was tricked into forging a crown that allowed themselves to be controlled by an Efreet. Once their Efreet slave master is banished, or even destroyed (along with the crown), the Azers can be set free. As a reward, the Azers can craft something valuable for the PCs.

Behir

Minions of Giants

Frequency: 1

Setting: Cave that is high on a mountain, or hillside

Senses: Darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 16

Size: Huge size (roughly 15 ft long)

Speed: Fast at 50 ft. Climb at 40 ft.

The Behir are cavern predators that have lairs up high and out of reach. They will never locate a lair near the vicinity of a dragon. While a Behir could be very dangerous for a party of adventurers, it usually focuses its attack on a single creature — and once swallowed, it immediately seeks out a place where it can rest.

Range of its Lightning Breath is 20 ft (recharge 5-6). This could be deadly for PCs lined up in a 10 ft wide cavern - and with prior knowledge, the Behir could surprise PCs if a door is opened (for example). The Behir can be waiting in the dark, utilizing its darkvision of 90 ft. Devious GMs could narrow the cavern down to 5 ft to eliminate any chance of PCs rolling a Dex save against the lighting attack.

Side note: PCs can be tricked into taking the more narrow route in the cavern with planted gold, etc. Since the Behir isn't very intelligent, the baiting with gold coins and other valuables will likely be a crudely executed and obvious attempt at a trap. The Behir is *just* smart enough to instinctively know how to lure unsuspecting creatures into a trap, but it is too dumb to do this with any elegance or finesse.

Wherever the Behir is positioned to make a surprise attack, it requires ample space to turn, climb, and reposition itself for either a Lightning Breath attack (if recharged on 5-6), or a bite attack to grapple or swallow a PC. If a Behir manages to swallow a creature, it will immediately Dash back to its lair to digest the victim, and it has no concern for Opportunity Attacks during its retreat.

Once the Behir is reduced to half hit points or fewer, it will use Dodge to evade incoming attacks until it is out of reach; it will then use Dash to escape and climb quickly, up and out of a larger cavern space.

Tactics: Utilize the cavern space: small corridors (5 ft), opening to larger areas. Make escape routes easy for the Behir to climb and move through, but difficult for the PCs to get to. The Behir can squeeze into smaller areas by folding its legs back and slithering like a snake, so take advantage of this feature with the geography of its lair.

Utilize its darkvision (90 ft.) and Passive Perception (16). It knows the cavern much better than the PCs and should be able to position itself to have an advantage for surprise attacks.

A Behir is not interested in a fight with a party of adventurers. What it is interested in is snatching up a PC caught unawares for a tasty meal. It will use Bite and Constrict in attempts to Swallow the PC. A PC who is either at the front or back of the marching order is a likely target. There may be several openings in the cavern above, giving the Behir a chance to snatch a PC, or even to use its Lightning Breath attack. Its ability to use the cavern and guerrilla tactics could be problematic for PCs.

Non-combat resolution: Should a PC have the ability to speak draconic, the PC might have the opportunity to present a food offering to the Behir to sate its ravenous appetite. The group can then make their escape or use the distraction to further explore the Behir's lair.

Bugbear

Minions of more physically powerful and intimidating Masters

Frequency: 1-30+

Setting: Threatening civilized lands, forest edges, abandoned villages and towns

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (7 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Bugbears are stronger than hobgoblins, but lack the forward thinking and strategy, preferring to use brute force and intimidation instead. In terms of pecking order low to high—it would be goblins, hobgoblins, then bugbears. Interestingly, their tactics are more like a goblin—using stealth—but with much more effective damage capability. A Bugbear leaves strategy to their Hobgoblin cousins.

Tactics: Bugbears favor melee fighting, so leverage their Brute feature (similar to a crit with every hit). They have a Surprise Attack, allowing them to do a lot of damage to the first PC they engage.

Surprisingly stealthy (even at around 7 ft. tall), they will attempt to stay hidden until PCs get within 30 ft. They only flee when reduced to 10 hit points or fewer and are mostly confused when it happens, as they have a strong desire to live. They may even Dash, exposing them to opportunity attacks in order to stay alive.

Tip: Several Bugbears using a Surprise Attack with javelins could cause serious problems to PCs. Using Stealth +6 and utilizing Darkvision of 60 ft., each Bugbear could cause 1d6 with the javelin and 2d6 with the Surprise Attack on a successful hit. Once the PCs are caught off guard, the Bugbears quickly move into melee.

Combining this Surprise Attack with other goblins and hobgoblins, it could easily overwhelm the PCs—depending on the number of various goblinoids and how careless the PCs are. The PCs may be duped into getting into a scuffle with goblins, only to open themselves up to Hobgoblin arrows and the unobtrusive nature of the Bugbears, who would relish the idea of another trophy head of an adventurer.

Non-combat resolution: Bugbears speak common, but PCs might find it challenging to have any conversation with a creature whose main interest is simply dominating others. They are easily provoked into violence — a preference over diplomacy — so a PC can try to intimidate the Bugbear to gain its respect.

Bullywug

Minions of masters in swampy areas

Frequency: 1-30+

Setting: Bogs and swamps

Senses: passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (4-7 ft. tall)

Speed: Slow at 20 ft., fast swim at 40 ft.

While being bad tempered, Bullywugs would rather capture PCs as an offering to their master instead of fighting. Bullywugs can communicate with nearby frogs and toads, which is virtually imperceptible to PCs. While they are unintelligent, the communication gives Bullywugs a clear location of any PCs who enter their territory. They can then use this knowledge to surprise the PCs when they least expect it.

Bullywug Tactics: Use the Stealth and Swamp Camouflage features. This gives them advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks in swampy terrain. Standing Leap grants a normal (jump) move of 20 ft. per turn with no penalty of movement in swampy conditions. Ambush PCs near open water with overwhelming numbers: 3 Bullywugs to 1 PC. If they need to escape, Bullywugs have a Swim of 40 and will Dash if reduced to 4 or fewer hit points. If suddenly outnumbered by the PCs, the Bullywugs will flee and regroup later.

Cambion

Minions of greater fiends

Frequency: 1

Setting: Corrupted towns and cities

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Size: Medium (6 ft. tall average)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

Cambions are not brutish creatures. They are smart enough to study and assess an adventuring party ahead of time. Cambions can “hide in plain sight” using *alter self* to fit in a city setting (for example). While minions themselves, a Cambion is very comfortable corrupting a town, or village—anything to obtain power over mortals and advance their position.

Tactics: Consider having the Cambion devising a trap that leads to the PCs capture/arrest, or be an even be a liaison for their master. Leverage its Fiendish Charm when hiding, especially on PCs that have low WIS.

Cambions have resistance (half damage) to normal weapons—and are resistant to cold, fire, lightning and poison.

Use their fly of 60 ft. to their advantage. A strategy of flying in and out of range, or hovering would be good. Opportunity attacks on a Cambion are possible. However, with a high AC (19), resistance to normal weapons, and some types of magic—the Cambion has confidence in melee combat situations.

Use Fire Ray from a long distance (up to 120 ft.). It can be used 2 times per round (*Multiattack*), which could cause issues for PCs that are exposed.

Use Spear and fire damage in close range attacks. The spear attack would be a *distant* 2nd choice of strategy.

Save *plane shift* for a quick retreat if reduced to less than half hit points. Cambions have a strong instinct to stay alive. It will try to use Fiendish Charm within 30 feet.

Non-combat resolution: It may be possible to bargain with a Cambion, as they are intelligent and eager to pursue power. This is usually at the expense of mortals, so it may be a moral challenge for some PCs choosing to make a deal with an evil fiend known to be corrupt.

Chimera

Minions of a master who keeps them well fed and supplied with treasure.

Frequency: 1

Setting: Hillsides, temperate regions

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Size: Large (roughly 10 ft long)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft. fly at 60 ft.

A Chimera is not a stealth fighter and loves to engage in close quarters. They are not intelligent and will have no real strategy planned. They are **highly** unpredictable and enjoy toying with their victims.

Being that a Chimera enjoys tormenting and terrifying other creatures, what seems like a retreat is only a ruse for a later attack. A PC is little more than prey to be toyed with. While they do not speak any languages, the Chimera only understands draconic.

Tactics: With a fast fly speed of 60 ft. and fire breath, exposed PCs are be sitting ducks if they don't take cover, or are unprepared. A Chimera will not be slowed down in rough terrain. It will prioritize Fire Breath, when available, to cause the most amount of damage.

With darkvision of 60 ft, the Chimera could surprise PCs in the evening, or early morning.

Non-combat resolution: Negotiation with a Chimera may prove difficult once combat has begun. Their ability to understand languages is limited (draconic). It is well known that they often fight to the death, but with the proper motivation or intimidation, the Chimera may be convinced to lay off the attack of a PC group.

Cyclops

Unwitting minions of a master who may have tricked them into service, or to protect an area.

Frequency: 1-4

Location: Any hillside, or woodlands near mountains

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Size: Large (roughly 12 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Cyclops are easily tricked into believing that someone who has magic abilities is a powerful being. They usually are reclusive, or live in small, isolated groups.

A master may deceive them in order to protect a certain area, and as long as the Cyclops and its community are satisfied, they have no reason to suspect otherwise.

Tactics: Due to their poor depth perception, a Cyclops will tend to engage at short range (30 ft. or fewer). If PCs are careless entering an area, a group of Cyclops hurling Rocks from above can be deadly. Once the rocks have been used up, a Cyclops moves into melee using their Greatclub Multiattack.

Cyclops have low Intelligence and Wisdom and won't plan ahead. However, they understand how to flank and move in and out of combat to adjust to the enemy's positioning. They are not innovative and prefer to simply smash an opponent instead. A Cyclops will flee if reduced to 35 hit points or fewer. They will risk Attacks of Opportunity as they realize they are outmatched.

Tips: It's likely a Master will plan ahead on the Cyclopes' behalf. Perhaps the Cyclopes' master has trained them over time to have a stack of rocks available — just in case they are "needed" to defend an area. If PCs walk in an open area where Cyclops can rain down rocks on each side, it could be a potentially deadly encounter.

Non-combat resolution: Outsiders are treated with suspicion, but savvy PCs may be able to win them over if they speak Giant. A spellcaster who has the benefit of enthralling the Cyclopes may be convincing enough to buy enough time to circumvent the area, or gain their trust. How the PCs might know this should be left up to the GM. Being reclusive and potentially territorial, the Cyclopes may be hard to convince not to attack PCs. If the Cyclopes sense any deception, they might lash out.

Devil - Imp

Minion messengers to evil masters

Frequency: 1-6

Location: Castle, or keep

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Size: Small (roughly 2 ft. tall)

Speed: Slow at 20 ft. fly at 40 ft.

Imps are used as messengers or stealthy guardians of an area. If on a mission, they will prioritize delivering a message and attempt to stay alive at all costs. If the task is to guard an area, they will fight to the death, but one will turn invisible and escape to inform their master about the attack.

Tactics: Leverage their ability of Stealth, Invisibility and Flying speed of 40 to their advantage. Imps have the Shapechange ability as an action, giving them better movement over certain terrains.

Sight advantages: Darkvision 120 ft and also Devil's Sight (can see in magical darkness). A night time or dark environment grants Imps visual advantages and they are smart enough to plan for these benefits ahead of time.

Imps in a skirmish will move in and out of combat, using a combination of flying and shapechange into a spider that can climb 20 feet. While they might risk opportunity attacks flying out of combat, Imps can confidently enter a battle knowing they are resistant (half damage) to nonmagical weapons that are not silvered. They are immune to fire and poison damage as well.

Imps may choose to target spellcasters first, as they are magic resistant (advantage to saves) against spells and magical effects. Spellcasters are generally less resistant to their poisonous sting as well and the devious Imps instinctively seek them out first.

Non-combat resolution: Mortals wishing to negotiate with a fiend should approach with caution. An Imp's only real motivation is to serve their master. Any offer from a PC would have to be enticing—and also with evil intentions. There is a potential moral dilemma negotiating with devils—even lesser ones.

Dryad

Minions of a more powerful fey master

Frequency: 1-6

Location: Old forest

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Size: Medium (4-7 ft. tall)

Speed: 30 ft.

Normally ones to avoid combat, if pressed, or if PCs are threatening an area within the forest, a Dryad can be a frustrating opponent. Their primary role are as guardians, but on occasion, a Dryad may become smitten with an outsider, which could be hazardous for any unsuspecting PC.

Dryads are intelligent and locate themselves near large trees, allowing them to use Tree Stride.

Tactics: The ability to Tree Stride is vital to their movement strategy and they know their environment extremely well, effectively moving up to 70 ft in a round without provoking an opportunity attack. In combat, they immediately use *barkskin*, then *shellelagh* as a bonus action on their club, which will last for up to 1 minute.

Leverage their Fey Charm, which can attempt to make a single PC become a trusted friend. This may seem like a bad strategy from a single Dryad against multiple PCs, but if there are 5 PCs and 6 Dryads within 30 ft and in sight, it could sway the numbers greatly to the Dryad's side.

Dryads are not interested in battling to the death, so when reduced to 8 hit points or less, they will flee.

Non-combat resolution: Convincing the Dryad that the PCs are not a threat and are just passing through is a possible scenario. Helping to remove a threat to the forest might be welcomed. Dryads are suspicious, and previous actions of the PCs will determine the demeanor of the Dryads.

Duergar

Minions of more powerful masters (perhaps drow) in a dungeon setting

Frequency: 1-6

Setting: Underground dungeon, cave system

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (4 ft. - 5ft tall)

Speed: 25 ft.

Leverage their Darkvision 120 ft, Invisibility and Advantage on saves vs poison, spells and illusions. Duergar have Resistance to Charmed and Paralyzed as well. Knowing this, they will not be afraid to enter the fray with PC spellcasters.

Tactics: Use Invisibility to make a surprise attack using a javelin 30/120 ft., or war pick if closer than 25 ft. Duergar are only average on Wisdom, so they won't be great planners and will lean more towards brute force, surprise and taking advantage of the dark environments. They are wise enough to avoid any sunlight, as they have a Sunlight Sensitivity.

A threatened Duergar will instinctively use the Enlarge Action (lasts 1 minute) to give itself size and strength advantages during combat.

A duergar reduced to 10 hit points or fewer will attempt to flee. Use *invisibility* if it hasn't been used yet.

Elementals

Minions of powerful wizards

Frequency: 1-4

Setting: Any

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft. - 90 ft., depending on type

Elementals are instinctive and summoned to serve a purpose for their master. Their lives are generally short lived. The act upon instinct, are not consumed with living a mortal life, and are more interested in returning to their plane of existence after the completion of their summoned purpose.

Air Elemental:

Fast fly movement of 90 ft.

High dexterity

Resistance to lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons (half damage)
Immune to Grappled, Restrained, and Prone.

Leverage their speed and agility. Take advantage of their ability to get into small places (1" wide). Their preferred attack is Whirlwind (recharge 4-6).

Tactics: If the Whirlwind attack succeeds and flings PCs in random directions, it could be very hazardous if the encounter happens near a high ledge, bridge, etc.

The random direction can be determined with a d4 die roll:

1 = North, 2 = South, 3 = East, 4 = West

Once PCs are recovering from Whirlwind, the Air Elemental quickly moves in for its two Slam attacks. The Slam attacks can be divided between the PCs, as long as they are within range. The air elemental can move between attacks as well, being unconcerned with attacks of opportunity since it is immune to nonmagical weapon attacks.

Fire Elemental:

Fast movement of 50 ft.

High dexterity and constitution

Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons (half damage). Immune to Fire, Poison, Grappling, Exhaustion, Paralyzation, Petrification, Poison, Being Prone, Restrained and Unconscious. A Fire Elemental's preferred attack is moving into an occupied space, or through it in order to ignite flammable objects within it.

Tactics: Its motivation is to set everything on fire that it can. It does not necessarily need to attack in order to set things ablaze. Using its Fire Form and speed of 50 feet, it only needs to be within 5 feet to catch items on fire or cause damage to a creature.

A devious Master could have a Fire elemental hide behind a false wall, with a small 1 inch gap or more for it to enter into a room filled with objects that could ignite easily.

Fire elementals are not good strategists, so they won't think ahead enough to avoid water or cold damage, which they are susceptible to. A Master, however, could put the fire elemental into a situation to help it leverage its fire ability and remove the likelihood of water being present.

Elementals (continued)

Minions of powerful wizards

Frequency: 1-4

Setting: Any

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft. - 90 ft., depending on type

Elementals are instinctive and summoned to serve a purpose for their master. Their lives are generally short lived. The act upon instinct, are not consumed with living a mortal life, and are more interested in returning to their plane of existence after the completion of their summoned purpose.

Water Elemental:

Fast swimming movement of 90 ft.

High strength and constitution

Resistance to acid; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons (half damage). Their preferred attack is Whelm (recharge 4-6) and entering a creature's space.

Tactics: It's more likely that an attack will happen on land, therefore, a Water Elemental will choose to seek out medium sized PCs that are grouped together. Leverage that it can grapple two PCs at the same time, and attempt to drown them. PCs that are not grappled suffer a Slam attack.

Water elementals are even less strategic than other elementals, so they won't prepare ahead of time to avoid being slowed down by cold damage. They seek to overwhelm creatures who are grouped together.

A master capable of thinking ahead could position a water elemental in a cavern stream, or near a water source, to allow it to take advantage of its water speed. Knowing that the Water Elemental will attempt to grapple and drown PCs, a confined space near a water source can be deadly.

Earth Elemental:

Average speed, but can burrow 30 ft.

Very high strength and constitution

Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons (half damage). Their preferred attack is a Slam.

Tactics: Seek out and destroy one target at a time. Typically, they will choose the closest opponent within 30 ft. and not move onto the next until the first victim is eliminated.

A Master will usually have Earth elementals in open fields, have them occupy a keep or castle courtyard, etc. Using Earth Glide, they could quickly emerge and potentially surprise PCs. Utilize Tremorsense of 60 ft. to catch PCs off guard. If PCs take cover, a Master may direct the earth elemental to destroy the wall or any structure providing cover.

Earth elementals are vulnerable to thunder damage, but a Master will typically take their chances when using them in combat, or siege situations, where they can do double damage against structures.

Tip: For determining stone wall AC and hit points, use the *wall of stone* spell stats: Each 10-foot-by-10-foot panel has AC 15 and 30 hit points per inch of thickness. Reducing a panel to 0 hit points destroys it and might cause connected panels to collapse at the GM's discretion.

Dire Wolf

Minions of any Master who raised them and feeds them well.

Frequency: 1-10

Setting: Any

Senses: passive Perception 13

Size: Large (9 ft. long)

Speed: Fast movement of 50 ft.

Tactics: Leverage Pack Tactics if more than one other Dire Wolf is within 5 ft. of the same PC it is attacking. It is not uncommon to have four direwolves attack a single PC. Any PCs who are clearly injured are sought out first.

A Master can dispatch several Dire Wolves whenever possible, so that the attack advantages could potentially overwhelm PCs, or catch them off guard. While not overly intelligent, they are able to follow basic commands. They can be ordered to target specific PCs if they are in hearing range of their Master.

Drow, Drow Warrior and Drow Mage

Minions of more powerful evil Masters.

Frequency: 1-4

Setting: Underground cavern, or dungeon

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12 - 14

Size: Medium (4'7" - 5'5")

Speed: 30 ft.

Fey Ancestry: Advantage on saves against Charmed. Immune to sleep magic.

Innate Spellcasting. At will: *dancing lights*. 1/day: *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Drow (standard)

Drow use a shortsword or hand crossbow depending on the scenario. With an average Intelligence, they plan to ambush PCs from a distance whenever possible. Their preference is to use poison bolts to incapacitate enemies before engaging in close combat.

They also utilize their ability to see in the dark up to 120 ft. It's very unlikely they will subject themselves to sunlight, rather they choose to gain any advantage in a cavern or dungeon. If it is an outside or open field setting, it is *always* at night.

Tactics: A Drow who can see a target will move within 60 ft and use *faerie fire* while attempting to be unseen by the PCs. *Farie fire* offsets the disadvantage of the hand crossbow distance of more than 30 feet. If PCs try to hide using *Stealth*, the drow within range can use their *dancing lights* in order to illuminate hidden PCs so they do not suffer any disadvantage on perception checks. PC spellcasters will be targeted with *darkness* as well.

A small group of standard Drow using poison bolts could wreak havoc on unsuspecting PCs. Enough low rolls by the PCs could see several party members going unconscious, shifting the numbers in favor of the drow.

Drow will fight to the death and do whatever they can to not be captured. They may only choose to flee if reduced to 6 hit points or fewer.

Drow Warrior

Similar to the standard drow tactics, a drow warrior has more tools at her disposal.

Innate Spellcasting. At will: *dancing lights*.

1/day: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, and also *levitate* (self only)

Tactics: A Drow warrior is well suited for melee weapon combat. It has the ability to Parry and also a Multiattack. With a shortsword, it can deliver Poison damage. It will also have many more hit points, superior armor and a very high dexterity compared to a standard drow. It can utilize some of the same range attack tactics, but will be much more formidable in close combat situations. After a surprise round, the drow warriors will often choose to enter melee combat, leaving the ranged drow to stay back and focus fire from a distance. They prioritize their attacks on any dwarf PCs, or those in the adventuring group who pose the biggest threat.

Drow Mage

Having all the abilities of a standard drow, a drow mage will leverage their ability to use magic from a distance.

Innate Spellcasting. At will: *dancing lights*. 1/day: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, and also *levitate* (self only)

Tactics: Mages will stay back. Let them use their magic to their advantage and allow the warriors and standard drow (if available) occupy the PCs in battle. Immediately *summon demon* while you can. Either a Quasit or Shadow demon is summoned and either type benefits the drow action economy. Have the demon attack the PCs, targeting spellcasters if possible. After that, move on to the available spells, or use the Staff in melee—but only if absolutely necessary.

Spell usage tips: Use *cloudkill* first if there is means of escape behind the spell, or around it. If the affected *cloudkill* area around the PCs is 20 feet in diameter, even better. If *cloudkill* is not an option, then use *greater invisibility* to give more time to maneuver the drow into better strategic positions. The next round, use *black tentacles*, followed up with a targeted attack on the toughest PC it can identify. After that, use *lightning bolt* and consider keeping as much distance as possible from the PCs—especially the fighters. The longer the mage stays unharmed, the better. Use *web* if need be to slow the advance of the PCs.

Tip: A drow mage is a survivor and should always have a means of escape planned. Once it is reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, they will begin their exit strategy. Use *misty step*, or *darkness* to help their retreat.

Ettin

Minions, guards, or scouts of orcs—who can be enticed with promises of food and treasure.

Frequency: 1

Setting: Edge of an orcish outpost

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Size: Large (13 ft. tall)

Speed: Fast movement of 40 ft.

Choosing to stay in solitude, these two-headed orc cousins will be in a location where their keen sense of perception can be leveraged. While not always particularly loyal to orcs, they can—at times—agree to a task where it is mutually beneficial.

Usually, an Ettin will reveal itself from quite a distance, as it's not uncommon to hear each of its heads arguing crudely and loudly with one another. They are not subtle and their stench is noticeable from a short distance. If PCs are careless with stealth, they will be noticed by one of the two heads. Even a sleeping Ettin always has another head awake. It is difficult to surprise an Ettin.

Ettin Tactics: Ettins are not great planners, managing that by being very aware at all times. Ettins have advantage on Perception checks and saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned and being knocked unconscious.

An Ettin's primary role is to stand guard on the outside of an Orc camp. Consider having an early warning system in place. A group of PCs might overwhelm a single Ettin within a round or two. Given the Ettin's preference for solitude, a Master will likely anticipate its weakness. The Master will instruct the Ettin to warn nearby Orcs at the first sign of trouble. This warning can be with a bell, horn, or a whistle.

The Ettin is certainly no pushover, and can do some serious damage to a group, especially with Multiattack. An Ettin's instinct is to lash out at the first PC it encounters, saying “*Who dares disturb my peace?*”, spoken in giant.

Flameskull

Minions of evil spellcasters.

Frequency: 1

Setting: Protection of a place, item, or person.

Senses: Darkvision of 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Size: Small (floating humanoid skull)

Speed: fly at 40 ft.

A Flameskull's mission is quite simple: *Protect at all costs*. It only has vague memories of its former life and is absolutely obsessed with its task, even at the expense of its existence. In fact, even if defeated, the Flameskull has Rejuvenation and will reform in one hour, ready to continue its duties.

Tactics: A Flameskull doesn't have high AC, or a great amount of hit points, so leverage its tiny size and ability to fly. Cast spells from a distance. It would rarely ever get closer than 30 feet to attack. A strategic Master will have the Flameskull protect an area that has proper cover and space to move out of range of attackers. It will approach just close enough to cast a spell, then fly back into cover. The Flameskull's absolute mission is to protect an area, and with a high Intelligence it won't be easily tricked into abandoning its task.

A Flameskull knows that spellcasters are its primary threat, so it will certainly target them first. If it can surprise the PCs in a confined space (or before they scatter), it will launch a *fireball* in order to maximize first round damage. It will then attempt to move out of visual range and take cover. If by chance the Flameskull is the target of a ranged attack, or an attack by *magic missile*, it will take a reaction and use *shield*. Otherwise, it saves the 1st level slots for *magic missile* in order to inflict as much damage to the PC spellcasters as it can. If it finds itself in a scenario that allows for PC melee attacks, use the *blur* spell and then have it seek out cover when it can.

Leverage the Flameskull's spells first and then work in the Multiattack Fire Rays in later rounds. Keep the Flameskull moving out of the range of melee attacks whenever possible.

A Flameskull also has Magic Resistance, so it should give itself a few rounds to take on several PCs. It will never retreat or surrender as it is obsessed with protecting the area. If by chance it is turned, it immediately returns to its assigned area once the effect ends.

Galeb Duhr

Guardians summoned to protect lands or other areas

Frequency: 1

Setting: Rocky hillside, mountainside, underground tomb
Darkvision of 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Size: Large (9 ft. long)

Speed: Slow at 15 ft. (unless rolling at 30 ft., or downhill at 60 ft.)

A Galeb Duhr serves as a sentinel to protect an area. It may go unnoticed as it looks exactly like a large boulder until it animates to life. Once the area is threatened, a Galeb Duhr moves into action, using its Animate Boulder action, Rolling Charge feature and Slam attack.

Tactics: A master will have the Galeb Duhr positioned above the area whenever possible, granting better positioning for it to use its Rolling Charge. The Galeb Duhr will Animate Boulders nearby and roll downhill towards targets. While concentrating on Animate Boulders for one minute, it will allow the PCs to expend resources before it attacks.

Non-combat Resolution: A Galeb Duhr won't be easily swayed. On occasion they have been known to talk to those who know its language (teran). It may stop attacking if the PCs agree to leave the area it protects.

Gargoyle

Minions of cruel and powerful spellcasters and demons

Frequency: 1-6

Setting: Cliff sides, underground cavern roosts, rooftops

Senses: Darkvision of 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium

Speed: Fly at 60 ft.

A Gargoyle is motivated to serve powerful evil. They have no issue with being cruel and enjoy any opportunity to make victims suffer. This is why they align themselves—without hesitation—to evil beings, serving as guardians.

Tactics: Even veteran PCs may mistake a gargoyle as a statue when they use False Appearance. Leverage this ability to surprise, and darkvision at 60 ft to see the PCs coming. Their main defense (damage resistance) is against weapons that are nonmagical or not made from adamantite. They will not hesitate to get into melee by flying in, using *Multiattack* and then Fly away at 30 ft. While this would provoke an opportunity attack, this tactic allows for a single attack instead of potentially multiple attacks from fighters.

Gargoyles will not flee and are determined to serve their masters until the end. They will attack PCs capable of flight or those with ranged attacks first.

On some occasions, Gargoyles may guard the lair of a Medusa. Their immunity to petrification makes them particularly useful and they are able to disguise themselves among the other “statues” quite easily.

Ghast

Minions of a Cleric, Warlock, or Wizard who summoned them

Frequency: 1-3

Setting: Any dungeon, cavern, graveyard, etc.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

A Ghast is a particularly nasty and potent version of a Ghoul. It is typically summoned and under the control of a spellcaster, but may on occasion be left behind and no longer be under control of a spellcaster.

With an Intelligence of 11 and the ability to speak Common, it's not unreasonable for a Ghast to try and manipulate PCs, and they can strategize ahead of time. Their motivation is driven by a hunger for flesh, so they will take any opportunity to consume it.

Tactics: A Ghast's Stench is so repulsive that it can poison a PC within five feet on a failed save. The poisoned condition applies disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until countered or remedied. Thus, the Ghast gets in close and attacks with its Claws and Bite. The Claw attack, in particular, can cause the Paralyzed condition, but a Bite does more damage without the chance of paralysis.

Additionally, a Ghast is very tough to turn compared to other undead. Turning Defense not only gives Ghasts advantage, but nearby Ghouls as well when saving. Ghasts will be smart enough to attack PCs with turning ability, even dispatching Ghouls in their direction who follow the Ghast commands. A single Ghast with 4-5 Ghoul minions of their own could be a hazardous encounter.

Ghasts are not mindless and will escape once they are reduced to 10 or fewer hit points.

Non-combat resolution: PCs may be able to avoid conflict by simply offering up what Ghasts and Ghouls want: living flesh. Given their higher level of Intelligence, they are not as animalistic as other undead. With the ability to talk (from a distance), it is conceivable that PCs bypass a fight by satisfying their needs.

Ghoul

Minions of a Cleric, Warlock, or Wizard who summoned them

Frequency: 2-6

Setting: Any dungeon, cavern, graveyard, etc.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

Similar to a Ghast in appearance, the Ghoul is usually summoned by a spellcaster and under their direction. If a great amount of time has passed, they will be aimlessly roaming, seeking out any live victims at random.

Tactics: If there are no Ghasts present to direct them, a Ghoul will be consumed by its hunger for live flesh. Its preferred attack is to use Claws to try and paralyze its victim. If it is an elf, they will resort to Bite only, as a Ghoul is intelligent enough not to waste the claw attack on it.

If a Ghast is nearby, it will lead the Ghouls in an attempt to overwhelm the PCs. They may try to drive the PCs into a trap, or dead end.

Ghouls are not mindless and will attempt to escape once they are reduced to 10 or fewer hit points.

Non-combat resolution: PCs may be able to avoid conflict by giving them what Ghosts and Ghouls want: living flesh. Given their higher level of Intelligence, they are not as animalistic as other undead, so with the ability to talk (from a distance), it is conceivable that PCs bypass a fight by satisfying their needs.

Goblin

Minions of hobgoblin warlords and bugbear chiefs

Frequency: 5-50

Setting: any dungeon, cavern, or abandoned mine

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Size: Small (4 ft.)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Goblins are small and nimble and are best used in areas where their numbers and size are to their advantage. Adventuring through a narrow corridor with dozens of Goblins hiding above could prove to be a very dangerous situation for unsuspecting PCs.

The Goblin's motivation is to take on powerful foes and bring their riches back to their Master.

Tactics: To help a Goblin survive longer in combat, use Nimble Escape on each of its turns. Leverage the varied types of traps that fill the dark places they call home. While some of these traps may be crude, it is "quantity over quality" when it comes to the traps that fill the goblin's abode. Even the most crude of traps may inconvenience and annoy the PCs, and it may inconvenience PCs just enough to be a concern for them.

Goblins will always choose to Hide and surprise PCs using Stealth whenever possible, granting them advantage on the first attack. After attacking with their shortbow, a Goblin will then attempt to Hide again. It will move up to 30 ft. and use its Hide bonus action each turn. Goblins will do their best to stay out of melee—but if they do, use Disengage. After the goblin Disengages, they will move as far away as they can from the PCs, while staying within striking range with their short bow. If they can eventually Hide again—even better.

Goblins reduced to 1-2 hit points will attempt to run away and will grovel if captured. But they will attempt to escape at the first opportunity that presents itself.

Golem

Minions of their creator using the Manual of Golems.

Frequency: 1-4

Setting: Guardians of sacred locations, tombs, or any area the Master would need guarded

Senses: Darkvision 60 - 120 ft., passive Perception 9-10

Size: Large (Up to 12 ft. tall), or Medium (Flesh Golem)

Speed: Average, 20-30 ft.

All golems are protectors of guardians that follow the commands of their creator. They use brute determination to fulfill their task in order to protect an area.

Strategy: Leverage all their immunities: non-magical weapons, charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, and poisoned.

• **Flesh Golem Tactics:** Use the Slam Multiattack when entering melee. The golem is indiscriminate. It sees all PCs as equal threats. A Flesh Golem has Aversion To Fire (*if the Fire Golem takes fire damage, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn*), so it will do its very best to avoid it. PCs may notice its hesitation when it sees fire.

A master who plans ahead will likely position a golem near a water source, or in a wet, rainy forest. Once the golem is reduced to 40 hit points or fewer, it starts its next turn Berserk on a roll of 6 (1d6), attacking the nearest creature in sight. When in this state it gains advantage on all Slam attack rolls, but Attack rolls against it have advantage while it is Berserk.

Tip: A particularly devious Master may have planted information for the PCs to discover using different minions. Since the Flesh golem absorbs electrical energy (Lightning Absorption), a Master may have started a rumor that the only way to "kill the monster" is by using lightning "to weaken and cripple it". The PCs only realize the deception after discovering that lightning damage actually helps the golem.

• **Clay Golem Tactics:** Similar to a Flesh Golem, but the Clay Golem may go Berserk at 60 hit points or fewer instead. Whenever possible, it will prioritize using Haste (+2 AC and advantage on Dex saves, recharge 5-6) and then use Slam attack as a bonus action until the Haste ends. All other attacks will be a Slam Multiattack.

Tip: A particularly devious Master may have planted information for the PCs to discover earlier using different minions. Since the Clay Golem absorbs acid damage (Acid Absorption), a Master may have started a rumor that the only way to "kill the monster" is by using acid "to help dissolve the tough earthen material". Only until the PCs become aware that acid actually helps the golem, do they become aware of the deception.

• **Iron Golem Tactics:** Similar to a Flesh Golem and Clay Golem, but will use its 10 ft. reach with a sword when using its Multiattack. The golem is just intelligent enough to know when to best use its Poison Breath. It will use Poison Breath once two or more PCs are within a 15-foot cone area.

Tip: A particularly devious Master may have planted information for the PCs to discover earlier using different minions. Since the Iron Golem absorbs fire damage (Fire Absorption), a Master may have started a rumor that the only way to "kill the monster" is by using fire "to soften the metals". Only until the PCs become aware that fire actually helps the golem, do they become aware of the deception.

• **Stone Golem Tactics:** Similar to other golems, the Stone Golem has a 10 ft. reach using Slam Multiattack. Once PCs are within 10 feet of the golem, it will attempt to Slow two or more targets within the 10 ft. radius. If there are less than two PCs, it will use Multiattack on a single target instead.

Tip: A particularly devious Master may have planted information for the PCs to discover using different minions. The Master could have instructed the golems to stand still as statues, and planted the following rumor ahead of time: "Ahead is a door flanked by large statues overgrown with vines. It has been there for a very long time. Who knows what is inside?" It may give just enough of a surprise element, as the Stone Golems have darkvision of 120 ft. This provides them a good chance of catching the PCs off guard.

Hell Hound

Minions of devils, fire giants and evil Masters who use them as guards and companions

Frequency: 3-8

Setting: Any dungeon, cavern, or keep

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Size: Medium (4 ft. tall)

Speed: Fast at 50 ft.

Tactics: In melee, use Pack Tactics and pick out the weakest, or smallest PC to attack first. As guards, utilize Keen Hearing and Smell to bark, thus sounding the alarm.

Given the likelihood of multiple Hell Hounds being used in melee, leverage their movement and Fire Breath ability whenever possible. The 15-foot Fire Breath cone should keep the hounds out of range of an opportunity attack and will likely spread out the PCs.

Use Fire Breath and move away from PCs, using their speed of 50 ft. Use the hounds that have not recharged Fire Breath to single out weaker targets with Bite. Move in to attack one target with multiple hounds, then move them out. By focusing on one target—usually the clerics or mages—you keep multiple opportunity attacks to a minimum.

Tip: In Round one, all the Hell Hounds will have access to their Fire Breath before they have to re-charge. This is the time to make this Action count. After that, leverage their ability to move in and out of melee and seek to separate a single PC from the main group.

Non-combat resolution: PCs may seek a parlay with the Hell Hound Master. If the hounds can hear their Master, they may reluctantly submit to the Master's instructions. The Hell Hounds will consider attempts of parlay as an obstacle, since they want to indulge their hunger. Due to this hunger and the base evil instincts of Hell Hounds, non-combat resolutions are potentially hazardous for the Master.

Hobgoblin

Minions of a powerful regional warlord

Frequency: 3-10+

Setting: Open grasslands, forests and mountains. Underground lair, or ruin strongholds.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (6.5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Tactics: Hobgoblins are more sophisticated and have more tactical forethought than their Goblin cousins. Battle is their life, and they relish the conflict. They are natural soldiers, intelligent and very organized, especially when compared to Goblins, who typically only use hiding and ambush tactics. It is not uncommon to see well-organized strategy by Hobgoblins.

Hobgoblins plan well ahead of time when it comes to battle preparation. They will attempt to learn about their opponent at every opportunity. In fact, they may direct Goblins as front line soldiers and stay back to assess the battlefield as the battle plays out. They are planners and will utilize their surroundings and numbers to their advantage.

Their only potential tactical flaw is that they despise elves and will usually attack them first. This all depends on to

what extent the Hobgoblin leadership hates elves. Some leaders will be wise enough to not allow this hatred to become a tactical folly.

A Hobgoblin stronghold is equipped with traps, fencing and guards. PCs should approach with extreme caution.

Tips: Whenever possible, have the Hobgoblins use reconnaissance to assess the strength of their opponent, and flanking methods to gain a tactical advantage.

Send Hobgoblin groups in waves. Use front-line "fodder" such as goblins or captured slaves. Follow them with archers using longbows, and keep them back to rain down arrows on the PCs. It is especially advantageous to attack at night since they have darkvision. Leverage their Martial Advantage in melee, and take advantage of the Hobgoblin Captain and Warlord's Leadership ability Actions.

Hobgoblins will always try to have at least a three to one advantage on an opponent before attacking. If they do not, they will choose to wait and increase their numbers, if possible.

Jackalwere

Minions of Lamias

Frequency: 2-5

Setting: Woodlands, edges of forests, road sides

Senses: passive Perception 12

Size: Medium (6 ft. tall)

Speed: Quick at 40 ft.

Tactics: A Jackalwere derives great pleasure from capturing humanoid victims for their Masters. Their goal is to deceive using their gaunt human form and eventually earn the PCs trust. They have a high INT of 13, so they can be cunning and also be very aware of elf PCs, who are immune to their Sleep Gaze.

Using subterfuge, the goal of the Jackalwere is to get close enough to use Sleep Gaze in order to kidnap victims and take them back to the Lamia. They prefer to escape unharmed. The attack will likely come as a surprise by use of Deception and Stealth. They will quickly flee after binding victims, as they are uninterested in a fight.

If they are forced to fight, leverage Pack Tactics. If reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, single Jackalweres will attempt to retreat using Disengage, then Dash. If there several Jackalweres in the battle they may be more inclined to stay and fight. If they have disabled several members of the PC group, the Jackalweres are typically emboldened.

Tip: Pack Tactics is particularly useful if one or two Jackalwere are able to befriend the PCs. Other Jackalweres can stay out of sight while remaining close by. Yet this tactic is risky, depending on how observant or suspicious the PCs are. A single Jackalwere's Sleep Gaze may be avoided rather easily. They will increase the chance of success by ganging up on a single target in the group, causing the PC to save multiple times against Sleep Gaze.

Non-combat resolution: Jackalweres derive pleasure by kidnapping victims to deliver to their Master Lamia. Parlay likely won't work because of their determination to capture, but it's not completely out of the realm of possibility. Their Chaotic Evil alignment should be taken into account in any negotiations.

Kenamüe (194)

Minions of rich Masters who promise treasure, or magical flight.

Frequency: 2-5

Setting: Cities, town markets, alleyways

Senses: passive Perception 12

Size: Medium (5 ft.)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Tactics: A Master may employ a Kenamüe to carry out unethical tasks. The Kenamüe is often tempted with rewards of riches, powerful magical items, or even the greatly coveted gift of flight.

Leverage their Ambusher and Mimicry abilities to give them an advantage when attempting to steal treasure or interesting items from the PC group. Kenamüe have average speed, but work well in groups using their unique ability to mimic any sounds they have heard.

Their preferred method of engaging PCs would be by surprise and using shortbows from a distance. Once the PCs seek cover, another group of Kenamüe move in closer and engage in melee using shortwords.

Kenamüe are intelligent and have self-preservation in mind. If reduced to 7 hit points or fewer, they will run away using Disengage and Dash when possible. If captured, they will try to negotiate their release by using their unique method of speaking.

Tip: Traveling PCs may not even notice the communications between several Kenamüe, as it is indistinguishable from the typical background sounds of the environment. The group will need a *reason* to be suspicious and may then attempt an Insight check.

Non-combat resolution: Greed is the Kenamüe's main motivation. It is possible that the PCs can negotiate a better deal than the *Kenamüe's* Master. Since they are intelligent creatures, they will likely sense deception in negotiations.

Kobold

Minions of a more powerful Master in a large cavern—typically evil dragons.

Frequency: 1-100+

Setting: Caverns, abandoned lairs, edges of wilderness

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

Size: Small (2.5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Tactics: Kobolds are small and prefer to attack in groups. They will always be found in dark places like caverns and never willingly expose themselves to sunlight. The more kobolds, the better, as their mindset is "safety in numbers."

The key to success is in knowing their surroundings better than the PCs. They ambush using a Sling whenever possible. Only when it is clear that they have the number advantage (around three to one) do Kobolds move in closer to engage in melee. A lone Kobold, lacking Pack Tactics, will always attempt to flee.

Kobold strongholds are filled with pit traps, honeycomb passages, and small places to hide. They do not have stealth to their advantage, so they rely mostly on their size, lair knowledge, and Pack Tactics to defeat enemies.

Tips: Depending on the level of the PCs, the number of Kobolds will determine how dangerous an encounter may be. This is achieved when PCs encounter wave after wave of Kobolds, keeping them on the run inside their cavern home.

Weaken the PC group by not allowing them to take Short or Long Rests. Also, use random encounters. Leverage the cavern's natural features that are too small for medium-sized creatures. Use the guidelines from *Squeezing into a Smaller Space* on page 92 in the SRD.

Have Kobolds emerge from small spaces, then fire into the group of surprised PCs. Kobolds will retreat into small cavern spaces immediately. Kobolds know the layout of their home well, so lead the PCs into dangerous areas with plenty of ambush points to increase their odds of victory.

Kobolds will—at *first opportunity*—let their master know of any intruders. A Master, perhaps deeper with the caver, will be well prepared ahead of time.

• Advanced Kobold Tips:

Rekcutt the Bold, a famous Kobold who passed on knowledge to his kin, provides the following strategies:

"Bring outsiders deep into our home. Use gold to catch their big ugly eyes. Outsiders love shiny things. They are greedy. We show ourselves and then run away like we are afraid—but we are NOT afraid! We trick them and give them a false mind. They are big and stupid. When the outsiders get too deep and they get lost, it is too late for them to escape!"

"Use the arrow machines (translation: crossbows) we took from outsiders. They left behind things and we take them. We use the holes (translation: murder holes) that are high up. We make them hard to see. We use their weapons against them!"

Note: Murder Holes grant three-quarter cover (+5 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throw).

"Use our special arrows that make the uglies fall down (translation: Drow Poison). Our tunnels that end can be filled with things that catch fire. It only takes one of us to make fire. The fat ones can't easily run away into a smaller tunnel. They are too big and ugly! Only we fit! We shut the entrance to the dead-end tunnel that is now on fire. Now we use the holes and arrow machines again and again. Watch them run! The only escape is down a tunnel and into the pointy hole we made (translation: Spiked Pit Trap). The uglies will have to avoid falling into the pit, but only the nimble ones will!"

Side Note: Before subjecting PCs to this potentially brutal scenario, give perceptive players a chance to obtain some advanced notice of their surroundings. They may come across pools of oil (flammable) in certain cavern passages, signs of previous skirmishes, blast burns, broken crossbows, small holes, or crude arrow slits in the wall and ceilings, etc. This will allow PCs a chance to prepare.

Non-combat resolution: Kobolds speak common and have slightly below average intelligence. A typical Kobold encounter will have them very motivated to kill, or capture the PCs, so they can taunt them in their crude prison cells - or bring them to their Master to ingratiate themselves.

What do the PCs have to offer instead? Perhaps a tantalizing treasure worthy of their Master? The PCs are not affected by sunlight like Kobolds, so they may be able to make a deal—depending on their previous actions. If the PCs have left an obvious trail of destruction in the Kobold lair, their chances of a somewhat peaceful resolution will be less.

Kooatalla Deep Ones (199)

Minions of twisted, other-worldly, mind controlling beings

Frequency: 3-10 / Whip: 1-4 / Archpriest: 1

Setting: Subterranean cavern, or at night along the water's edge, or shoreline.

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Size: Medium (5 ft.)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft. Swim is also 30 ft.

Deep Ones prefer to use Nets and Spears before getting into melee. They may not be stealthy, but they are very aware of their surroundings. Using Otherworldly Perception makes it difficult for PCs to hide, even if invisible. The Deep Ones have a very good chance of knowing if a group of PCs is coming, even if the group is careful.

Tactics: Since they can breathe underwater, use any nearby water source to their advantage: hiding under the surface, being resistant to fire damage, etc. They are intelligent enough to flank PCs, and will hide in water or behind other objects in the area.

Deep Ones will always want to have a two to one advantage against PCs. Use their nets if PCs are within 15 ft., and attempt to Restrain them. Other Deep Ones will then use their spears if within 20-60 ft., and then close in on any restrained PC. Any Deep Ones in melee will leverage Bite or Spear attack (Spear attack is preferred). Take full advantage of Sticky Shield, especially if they are able to occupy a PC fighter that is unable to use their weapon properly once it is stuck. This may result in a grappling scenario, which is an issue for PCs who have to deal with the Deep One's Slippery feature.

Open area attacks will always be at night since the Deep Ones have Sunlight Sensitivity. If a Deep One is reduced to 9 hit points or fewer, it will disengage and dash whenever possible.

Tips: Apply water-related rules if you wish to challenge PCs even more, such as giving Deep Ones cover when they are submerged. If PCs do not have the ability to swim or breathe underwater, apply disadvantage to attacks and saving throws when in waist deep or higher water. If PCs enter the water, the Deep Ones are more likely to use their nets or attempt to grapple. If Deep Ones can maneuver PCs closer to the water's edge, it will give them a distinct advantage.

Non-combat resolution: A motivation of the lower-ranking Deep Ones is to capture and return the PCs as a prize to their superiors. The likelihood of PCs speaking Undercommon is low, but resourceful PCs may be able to convey that they do not pose a threat.

PCs may become aware that Drow and Deep Ones are enemies, so savvy adventurers may be able to leverage the knowledge if they can somehow communicate it. The "enemy of my enemy is my friend" scenario might just work.

Kooatalla Deep One Whip Tactics:

Same as a normal Deep One, however, they have more abilities to use and can provide excellent support to a group.

The Whip will use Bane first on up to three PCs within 30 ft who are not already Restrained by nets. It will then target the next PC who clearly has a lower Dexterity using *sacred flame*, unless the Whip is within melee combat range of any PC. Continue using *sacred flame* if PCs stay out of range of melee range of the Deep One Whip.

If PCs do engage in melee, use the Pincer Staff to grapple a single medium or smaller creature. If more than one PC engages the Deep One Whip, it will Disengage and Dash either to escape or to give itself space to cast *sacred flame*.

A Deep One Whip will fanatically defend a Deep One Archpriest, but will attempt to flee if reduced to fewer than 25 hit points using Disengage and Dash.

Kooatalla Deep One Archpriest Tactics:

The Deep One Archpriest provides great support for a group attacking the PCs.

An Archpriest is a 10th-level spellcaster and could be quite a challenge to PCs who are unprepared. An Archpriest will only consider fighting a group of PCs if the numbers are in its favor, otherwise it will attempt escape in order to preserve the perverted knowledge it passes on to other Deep Ones.

A battle near land: The Archpriest utilizes *sacred flame* against a PC within 60 ft., and also *spiritual weapon*, since it is a bonus action. Target spellcasters first for two consecutive turns, depending on available spell slots.

A battle near water: The Archpriest will use *control water* to cause a flood, part water, redirect flow, or whirlpool—which is most effective against PCs. Keep the PCs in water so the other Deep Ones can have advantages with Swim and ability to breathe water.

Defensively, the Archpriest will attempt to keep the other Deep Ones alive by using *mass cure wounds* (30 ft radius), but only after the majority of its allies are reduced to half of maximum hit points. Keep the PCs occupied for as many rounds as possible by targeting spell casters and wounded PCs with *sacred flame* and *spiritual weapon*.

Rarely will an Archpriest enter direct melee combat. They prefer to flee instead, but if cornered, they will cast *spirit guardians*. The spell can also be cast at a higher level if the slots are available to increase the necrotic damage by 2d8. The Archpriest can also utilize Multiattack with its scepter. This is a total of 22 hit points on each successful hit, including lightning damage.

Archpriests are tough with nearly 100 hit points, so by the time the PCs get through the other ranks of Deep Ones the battle could prove to be a challenge. If at any point the Archpriest drops below half hit points, it will Dash and swim away.

Lizard Folk

Minions of dragons and tribal leaders

Frequency: 3-10+ / Shaman: 1 / King or Queen: 1

Setting: Swamps, jungle, water edges

Senses: passive Perception 13

Size: Medium (6 - 7 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft. Swim is also 30 ft.

Lizard folk are extremely territorial and will take great care to rid themselves of anything they see as a threat. More often, they will see outsiders of their domain as potential food sources—especially if they are humanoid.

Tactics: With a relatively low INT of 7, there won't be a lot of planning to select the greatest threat out of the PC group. Lizard Folk are well equipped with guards who locate on the edges of their hunting territories. Use their Survival skill to track PCs from a distance.

Since they can swim as fast as they can walk on land, any attack near water is beneficial. They prefer to use Stealth and surprise attack, possibly lying in wait underwater with Hold Breath. When they emerge, they will throw Javelins if they are within 120 ft. of the PC group. Once in melee, mix up their Multiattack by using Heavy Club and Spiked Shield. They prefer to attack with a two to one advantage, and will target a single enemy at a time.

When they are reduced to half hit points the Lizard Folk will attempt escape in order to regroup and improve the odds of success. Yet, if in their own territory, the Lizard Folk will likely fight to the death.

Tips: Adjust the numbers to provide a more challenging scenario for PCs. Consider at least a two to one advantage to start, and depending on how the battle is going, add to or subtract from the number of Lizard Folk. Place the Lizard Folk in different areas: water, land, and even trees. Spread them out and keep the PCs guessing where an attack might be coming from. Cover can be provided by nearby trees and water.

Non-combat resolution: Speaking Draconic is vitally important. Any PC with the ability to enthrall by using visual illusions may cause the primitive Lizard Folk to hesitate, increasing the chance for them to listen.

The Lizard Folk are not inherently evil; they are savages. Any PCs that somehow ingratiate the Lizard Folk may find safe passage through their territory. While wiser and more open to negotiation with a higher Wisdom, a Shaman isn't usually impressed with magical theatrics. A Shaman typically speaks for the Queen or King. Depending on the previous actions of the PCs, they may be granted safe passage if they can negotiate with the Lizard Folk and ease their fear of outsiders.

Lizardfolk Shaman Tactics:

The assumption is that PCs will encounter a Shaman deeper into the Lizard Folk territory. Unless the PCs have taken extra care and precaution, the Shaman is fully prepared to engage them in a fight, and will have recruited help from other Lizard Folk to face the threat.

A Shaman is a 5th level caster and will immediately cast *conjure animals*. While they can summon several other types of animals, it is strongly suggested that they conjure eight giant poisonous snakes to occupy the PCs.

The Shaman has average Intelligence and will stay out of melee so that they can maintain Concentration on spells. If there are any PCs in the group who use ranged attacks, the Shaman will have anticipated this. If the scouts had done their job properly, the Shaman will instruct followers to ambush the group using Hide, targeting ranged and spell casting PCs with Spear attacks.

After using *conjure animals*, the Shaman will use *produce flame*, hurling the ball of flame at PCs within 30 ft (a ranged spell attack), inflicting 2d8 fire damage.

If the battle turns against the Lizard Folk and Shaman, it will attempt to cover their tracks by casting *fog cloud*, and *plant growth* to slow down the PCs to better aid their escape.

Tips: If any spellcaster moves within 30 ft of the Shaman, cast *thorn whip* and drag them into melee or close to melee.

Lizardfolk King/Queen Tactics:

If the PC group has managed to travel into the deepest reaches of Lizard Folk territory, they will undoubtedly encounter a frenzied group of Lizard Folk willing and prepared to defend their King or Queen.

Should the PC group encounter the Queen or King, it is the final stand. The King/Queen is an elite member of the Lizard Folk. They are fearless and will not back down from a challenge. The Lizard Folk subjects will fight to the death to protect their Leader.

Leverage the King/Queen's ability to use Skewer with their Trident attack. Alternate between Multiattacks with Trident and Claw—and Trident and Bite.

A King or Queen will never face a group of PCs alone. If the Lizard Folk have the advantage in numbers (two to one, or better), the Ruler will not hesitate to enter melee. They will seek out the first PC within the range of their Movement to convey how powerful they are. A Lizard Folk King or Queen will fight to the death if it allows their subjects to escape, especially since they will become martyrs in the eyes of their subjects.

Lycanthrope - Wereboar

Minions and allies of powerful orc kings/queens

Frequency: 2-6

Setting: Forests and roadsides, at night

Senses: passive Perception 12

Size: Medium (6 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft., 40 ft in boar form

The threat of passing along its lycanthropy curse should be ever present. While attacking PCs, the Wereboar will mercilessly curse and mock them to cause fear and insecurity. There is nothing that a Wereboar relishes more than bringing about PC suffering.

Tactics: A devious and strategic Master will leverage the thug-like abilities of a group of Wereboars in order to extinguish the threat of a medium to high level group of PCs. Encountering less than two Wereboar at a time is rare, as they prefer to attack in groups of five or more.

Approach PCs in humanoid form in order to deceive them. They will appear as gruff and unattractive humanoids, but and they have enough Intelligence and Wisdom to appear credible as they carry on conversations in Common.

Once they have earned trust, and at the appropriate time, use their Shapechanger action to transform into a Hybrid humanoid-boar 15 ft. or more away from the PCs. Use Charge as a Surprise. In melee, Multiattack using Tusks and then Maul. Wereboars will fight and then fight some more, relishing the opportunity. Using Relentless, they inflict as much damage to PCs as possible. They are very aware of their immunity to non-magical or silvered weapons. If PCs are able to reduce the Wereboar to fewer than half their hit points, they will Multiattack one more time in an attempt of passing on their Curse. *Only then* will they move at full speed their next turn to escape, even risking attacks of opportunity.

Tips: Feign injuries to appear frail and gain the sympathy of PCs. Apply superficial cuts, using a small silver-tipped blade and appear as common folk repairing items well into the night. Whatever will throw off the PC's suspicion and allow them close will help the Wereboars' odds of success. Wereboar are not high in CHA, so the deception may be short lived and they will attack quickly.

Non-combat resolution: Given how focused a Wereboar is in passing on their curse, there might be a very small opportunity to negotiate, but only if one of the PCs has the ability to *remove curse*. A natural-born lycanthrope is more difficult to cure, as that can only be achieved with a *wish*. Most Wereboars encountered will have embraced their curse, so this may prove challenging to all but the most charismatic PCs.

Magmin

Minions of the spellcasters who conjure them

Frequency: 3-10

Setting: Anywhere that causes maximum fire damage.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Small (3 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Magmin will take great joy in being able to set anything they can on fire. They are absolute pyromaniacs. Therefore, should a spellcaster wish to burn a structure down to ash or create chaos, the best bet is to summon a Magmin.

Tactics: While in the service of their Master, they can show a respectable level of understanding with a INT of 8. Magmin are not tactical creatures, and do not plan once they are conjured. Rather, they spread out to catch as much as they can on fire, even at the risk of drawing attacks of opportunity. In their goal of setting as much as they can on fire, the Magmin seem to ignore immediate threats such as PC groups.

A devious Master will set up an area beforehand with multiple flammable objects. These objects are always irresistible targets to the Magmin who delight in setting them on fire.

Use flammable objects inside the structure and leverage the Magmin's Death Burst to inflict fire damage and create maximum chaos. In a short amount of time, objects such as walls, floors and ceilings, may be so engulfed in flame that it begins to affect the structure.

Any PC interfering with the goal of Magmin desiring to set something ablaze will be met with a Touch attack. They are fearless when fighting, knowing that, upon being reduced to zero hit points, they will simply return to their original plane of existence. While on this plane, the Magmin will seize any opportunity to see their new world come to life in glorious flame.

Non-combat resolution: Magmin are not evil, but are obsessed with flames and fires. If the spellcaster who conjured them loses Concentration, they will no longer be in control of the Magmin. Or, should the spellcaster perish, they will no longer be able to provide the Magmin with flammable resources, but perhaps the PCs can. The challenge will be in communicating with Magmin. If a PC speaks Ignan, they may be able to keep their attention long enough to converse.

Manticore

Minions of orc hordes, or hobgoblin armies. Minions of a wicked Master who feeds them well.

Frequency: 2-5

Setting: Grasslands, mountainsides, hillsides.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Size: Large (10 ft. long)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft., normal flying at 50 ft.

A Manticore will be motivated by food. They are not highly intelligent, and are driven by instinct and cruelty. They will often coordinate attacks with others of their kind. Masters that are able to amply feed the Manticores or provide them hunting grounds find them useful minions to serve as air support for their armies.

Tactics: Use air attacks within range, utilizing Tail Spikes first. Manticores typically hunt in packs, so this air attack strategy would apply to all of them early in a battle. Leverage their ability to fly and stay out of range of melee attacks until ordered to move in, especially if the numbers are not in their favor.

A Manticore Tail Spike has a range of 100/200 feet, with a Multiattack using 3 spikes. Since it has 24 tail spikes, the Manticore will attack from the air for up to *eight rounds(!)* until the spikes are depleted. If the PCs are unable to take cover, this is a devastating attack on a surprised PC group. A set up in wide open grasslands would be ideal, with the Manticores taking flight and attacking from above, where the Manticores can attack from above while mocking the PC group in Common.

Manticore Tactics continued: A pack of Manticores may also choose to attack from the air and ground in a coordinated effort. If there are more than two, they will try to flush PCs into the open to give any flying Manticores the opportunity to use Tail Spike. Even while on the ground and in melee, the Manticore can Multiattack with a Bite and two Claws per round. With over 80 hit points, it can realistically hold its own for several rounds in the attempt to attain a good meal. The Manticore seeks humans first. Otherwise they are indiscriminate. If they are reduced to less than 30 hit points, they will attempt to flee without much thought, even risking an opportunity attack while Dashing away.

Non-combat resolution: Manticores speak Common, are Lawful Evil, and have a keen ability to understand the world around them. There may be a way to communicate the fact that a better deal is possible. Motivated by their bellies, an insightful PC (who is not human) might be able to convey a more appealing option to the Manticores. PCs who have extensive knowledge of Manticores may also bargain with them in respect to their hunting territory, where rivals may interfere. If they can't offer food, they may be able to offer to rid their lands of rivals.

Ogre

Minions of giants, or manipulative Masters

Frequency: 1-5

Setting: Edges of civilized lands, abandoned keeps

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Size: Large (10 ft. tall)

Speed: Surprisingly fast at 40 ft.

Known for being stupid and cruel, Ogres serve as manipulated thugs for a Master who can satisfy their appetite for shiny objects. The less conversation with an Ogre the better, as too much talk may cause an Ogre to get confused and lash out until there is nothing left to break or kill. A well-placed Ogre may prove useful for a Master who wishes to protect certain areas. Leveraging their stupidity in their favor, a Master will compel the Ogres to do their bidding with promises of gold or useful weapons. This will help endear a Master to an Ogre—at least for a period of time.

Tactics: An Ogre is easily threatened and will lash out immediately, with little thought. With no planning or strategy, it will choose to throw its Javelin 30/120 feet at a PC. Otherwise, it will mindlessly run into melee and use its Great Club, seeking out dwarves, halflings and elves first.

Knowing the ruckus that an Ogre or several Ogres will cause, the noise can serve as an early warning signal. A Master will try to leverage the environment to favor close-quarter melee fighting for the Ogres. With their high hit points and potential for causing a lot of melee damage to PCs, have Ogres be the front-line brutes for the more powerful and tactically competent Masters. An Ogre will not have a strong sense of survival, so any feeling of its impending death will only cause it more confusion. Therefore, they will rage even more fiercely against the PCs. They will absolutely fight to the death.

Non-combat resolution: There is a small chance that a single PC—that is not a dwarf, halfling, or elf—might be able to communicate with the Ogre using Common or Giant. Any more speakers than a single PC will be perceived as a threat. Promises of treasure *may* cause the Ogre to pause—even if only a moment—to consider it. This is very risky. If the Ogre becomes confused it may lash out at the PC speaker, who then becomes the Ogre's next meal.

Orc

Minions of powerful spellcasters, Orc king/queen/lords

Frequency: 1-30+

Setting: Threatening civilized lands, villages and towns

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

Size: Medium (6.5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

An Orc is the well known brute in just about any encounter. They prefer to charge into melee, using their Greataxe and leveraging their intimidating physical presence. A typical encounter may vary wildly in numbers, but more likely they will appear in large groups. Finally, they can also appear in hundreds and thousands should the PCs be so unfortunate.

Tactics: From a distance (over 60 ft), an Orc will use Intimidation (+2) to appear as hostile and threatening as it can while hurling insults in Common. This is an initial battle of wills by the PCs and Orcs. Orcs are emboldened by PC's failed Charisma checks, and will immediately charge if PCs are closer than 30 ft.

An Orc has these available move options to engage PCs: Aggressive (bonus action)—a move of 30 ft. towards a hostile creature it can see, a Move action of 30 ft., and a Dash Action of 30 ft. This gives Orcs excellent movement into melee upon the next round if PCs are within 90 ft. If an Orc is still unable to engage in melee, they have the option of using their Javelin (Range 30/120 ft).

Tip:

If the Orcs have advantage in numbers, send wave after wave into melee. In round one, quickly move in to engage PCs and hold other waves of Orcs back until round two or later. Orcs may retreat if reduced to 6 hit points or fewer, but stick with the wave of Orcs strategy. The Orcs will only retreat using Disengage or Dash once the majority of them have been reduced to 6 or fewer hit points.

Note:

Hold the additional wave of Orcs 90 ft away and in separate smaller groups that can attack PCs from different areas.

Non-combat resolution: If PCs are able to match wits with an Orc, or even a group of Orcs, they may be convincing enough to allow safe passage, or gain information in order to avoid a physical conflict.

Orc tactics continues on page 88...

Orc War Chief

Minions of powerful spellcasters, Orc king/queen/lords

Frequency: 1

Setting: Threatening civilized lands, villages and towns

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (6.5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

A War Chief is an imposing presence and will leverage its high CHA to galvanize potentially dozens of Orcs when entering a battle. Even by themselves, they are formidable fighters.

Tactics: From a distance of 90 ft., have the War Chief send in the 1st wave of Orcs. On the following round the War Chief will lead a 2nd wave of Orcs into battle and engage in melee while using Battle Cry. It will then have a Bonus Action Attack against a chosen PC. This means the War Chief can move 90 ft. and still Attack a single PC!

On the following round, the War Chief will utilize Multiattack with its Greataxe. Additional damage on each successful hit can be attained by using Fury. Nearby Orcs affected by Battle Cry will have advantage on attack rolls until the end of the Chief's next turn. At this time the Orcs will likely do the most damage to PCs. Only when the War Chief is reduced to one-quarter hit points (24 hit points or fewer) will they consider retreat, using Disengage and Dash.

Tips: Send in wave after wave of Orcs while utilizing the tactics of the War Chief. Take advantage of the War Chief's Multiattacks and their ability to understand the battlefield. They are the most experienced and battle tested of all Orcs.

Orc Battlefield Cleric

Minions of powerful spellcasters, Orc king/queen/lords

Frequency: 1-3

Setting: Threatening civilized lands, villages and towns

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Size: Medium (6.5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Similar to normal Orcs, but have higher INT and WIS, plus the ability to cast spells.

Tactics: Charge into melee with the Battlefield Cleric, but on its second round cast *spiritual weapon* as a bonus action. It is now free to Attack with their Greataxe, and the added benefit of Fury causes 1d8 (4) additional damage on a successful hit. On the third round, cast *bless* (self) and up to two Orc leaders (if possible, and within 30 ft.).

Fourth round options: Attack with the Greataxe and also use *spiritual hammer*. If concentrating on *bless*, also cast *command* on PCs within 60 ft. This can potentially cause PCs to flee and provoke attacks of opportunity from the surrounding Orcs. A Battlefield Cleric has a strong desire for survival and will retreat if reduced to half hit points (23 or fewer), using Disengage and then Dash.

Tip: If using the *command* spell, target a PC that is surrounded by the most Orcs, or a PC that has low WIS, such as a fighter or mage, or a PC that might have a low WIS. It is suggested to use *bless* only once, as *command* can be used up to three times with the available spell slots.

Elite Orc

Minions of powerful spellcasters, Orc king/queen/lords

Frequency: 1-6

Setting: Threatening civilized lands, villages and towns

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (6.5 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

An Elite Orc is simply a tougher and smarter Orc. It will use the same engagement tactics as normal Orcs, but they are much more dangerous, as they have more hit points than other Orcs and higher ability scores that rival the PCs'.

Tactics: Same as normal Orcs, but leverage Multiattacks and their ability to plan ahead. An Elite Orc will take advantage of moving in and out of combat to give it and other Orcs as much advantage as possible. If it makes sense to Disengage to get a more tactical position, do so. It is not uncommon for Elite Orcs to command other Orcs in a similar way as War Chiefs, albeit without the Battle Cry ability.

Elite Orcs are planners and will not immediately engage PCs unless discovered, as they prefer the advantage of attacking at night. Only when an Elite Orc is reduced to one-quarter of its hit points (12 hit points or fewer), will it Disengage and Dash away so it can live to fight another day.

Q'kgoth (256)

Minions of Drow

Frequency: 2-20+

Setting: Underground cavern, or dungeon

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Size: Medium (6-7 ft. long)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft., but also a climb of 30 ft.

A PC group that encounters Q'kgoth usually finds them clinging to the sides of cavern walls, seeking out prey, or serving as Drow guardians in protected areas. Occasionally used for night raids top side, the Q'kgoth have a particular hatred towards surface elves. Drow have been known to use dozens of Q'kgoth to cause as much chaos as possible during a raid, leveraging their animalistic nature.

Tactics: While not pack animals, any Drow would have a Q'kgoth well trained to be socialized, therefore a two to one attack on PCs is likely. A Q'kgoth understands and speaks Undercommon, so they have the ability to follow basic instructions.

Their savage nature may overwhelm any strategy though, as they will be frenzied to taste any flesh they can. Knowing this, a Drow can send Q'kgoth in wave while the 2nd and 3rd wave wait impatiently to engage in melee. They are formidable opponents with Claw Multiattack and will always fight to the death once engaged in combat, using Wounded Fury to their advantage.

Tips: Q'kgoth can climb at a speed of 30 ft. Leverage any cavern environment and position them in areas where they can attack from above. Their 120 ft. darkvision will give them the ability to see PCs first and allow for a potential surprise round. Drow may provide cover (using arrows) for the Q'kgoth as they Dash to engage PCs in melee.

Q'kagoth Non-combat resolution: Speaking Undercommon may give the PCs a small opportunity to win a Q'kagoth over. Their primary motivation is feeding and they enjoy the frenzy of mauling their prey. If a group of Q'kagoth are pinned or mistreated by their Masters, they may be less aggressive towards PCs by way of communication. They are very suspicious of outsiders, particularly from the surface. If a surface elf is in the group the negotiations will be more difficult. The Q'kagoth absolutely hate surface elves, who drove their kind underground ages ago.

Skeleton

Minions of a spellcaster who raised them from the dead.

Frequency: 1-20+

Setting: Ancient battlefields, tombs, graveyards and dungeons

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Size: Medium (6 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Skeletons can range in skill level depending on what they were in their former life. This unpredictability can add variety to any encounter. Generally, most Skeletons are normal humanoids, but occasionally PCs may encounter dual wielding fighters, archers, or other variants. Their former instincts may apply at times, like a distant memory.

Tactics: Skeletons are not mindless, and while they may not be able to communicate themselves, they are able to obey the orders of their Master.

Planning ahead, a Master will position Skeletons properly to maximize the skills they had in their former life. Archers tend to stay back over 40 ft. out of melee and fire arrows at spellcasters—using cover when possible. Former fighters might Disengage and move to gain more strategic positioning; they will also use Dodge on occasion.

A Master will attempt to attack PCs with a two to one advantage whenever possible. Ideally, a Master will send several waves of Skeletons once the PCs are engaged in melee, leveraging the skeleton's drive to kill any living creature they encounter. Keep the Skeletons spread out into smaller groups to offset area effect spells.

Tip: An experienced Master will know that Turn Undead has a range of 30 ft. Keep some Skeletons back 60 ft. and then send a small group to attack using Dash to engage in melee combat. If a PC uses Turn Undead, it will minimize the effect on a smaller amount of Skeletons.

A Master will send another wave of Skeletons, using the Dash action, to engage PCs from as far away as 60 ft. Try to position smaller groups of Skeletons away from the range of Turn Undead whenever possible while supplementing with Skeleton Archers who that fire arrows from a long distance.

Skeletons are relentless and will not stop pursuing PCs once they are discovered. They will keep fighting until they are destroyed.

Troll

Minions/mercenaries to orcs, ogres, hags and more dominant giantkin

Frequency: 1-6

Setting: Mountainous regions, colder climates, cave entrances

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Size: Large (9 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft.

Trolls are the quintessential brutes and will likely not pre-plan for any conflict with PCs. They know they are tough due to Regeneration and they know they are susceptible to fire. Trolls are good guards due to their keen sense of smell, despite how loathsome they are to other giantkin. Typically, they are only tolerated by others of their kin, and only marginally.

Tactics: Leverage their abilities for a night attack by using Darkvision and Keen Smell. They have a claw/claw/bite Multiattack every round, so they would engage PCs as quickly as possible—even using Dash to do so.

Any PC fire or acid attacks will only give the Trolls pause after they are reduced to half their hit points (42 hit points or fewer).

Trolls can re-attach a severed limb as a bonus action if it is within 10 ft. of it. If a Claw is more than 10 ft. away, the severed Claw can still move 5 ft. to make a single attack. Severed limbs—even a head—aren't useful until re-attached, and severed parts from other Trolls are not interchangeable and will only re-attach to their original body.

Trolls will not consider retreat until lowered to one quarter of their max hit points, and especially if PCs are using fire or acid attacks.

Tips: A Master who knows a Troll's strengths and weaknesses will put them in a setting where they may have a better chance of success. For example: a torch lasts 1 hour. Lighting a torch takes an Action. Trolls are typically instructed to wait until torches are extinguished before they strike.

If the Trolls are able to utilize Darkvision and surprise the PCs, they will likely try to extinguish any fire source. Trolls are 9 ft tall and 500 lbs and would have no problem carrying a large skin of water in order to douse any flames. Once there is no light in the area, leverage their abilities to see and smell in darkness.

Non-combat resolution: Trolls are cruel and disgusting, so any conversations are unlikely and limited to the giant language. They have an appetite for sentient flesh, with female trolls having an even larger appetite. They see any interaction as a delay to their feast upon the PCs. Only the most convincing of PCs could momentarily catch the attention of a Troll, and only with the promise of a better "deal" than they have with their current Master.

Vampire Spawn

Minion of a vampire

Frequency: 1-2

Setting: Near their gravesite soil, or coffin, catacomb

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Size: Medium (5 - 6 ft. tall)

Speed: Normal at 30 ft., Spider Climb at 15 ft.

A Vampire Spawn is an unwilling servant of the Vampire who created them. While not being controlled by their creator, the Vampire Spawn will see itself superior to any humanoid—even other undead. They are an arrogant and formidable opponent if PCs are unprepared, especially if a PC find himself alone. The Vampire Spawn's goal is clear: To seek the blood gift from their master, or even another true Vampire.

Tactics: Utilize Darkvision of 60 ft, Spider Climb, and Resistance to nonmagical weapons. They have two types of attacks: a Claw/Claw or a Claw/Bite. The Bite is used if the PC is incapacitated, restrained, grappled—or willing.

A Vampire Spawn is well aware of its weaknesses and is very unlikely to engage PCs except at night and away from running water, choosing to wait for ambush instead. If at any point the Vampire Spawn feels like they do not have a tactical advantage, they will Disengage and use Spider Climb to escape. They value their “un-life” very much, choosing only to prey on those they think are weaker. They flee if reduced to fewer than 30 hit points, unless they are under the control of their Vampire Master.

Tips: The Vampire Spawn's bite causes damage (2d6) to PCs and restores the same amount of its own hit points.

Non-combat resolution: Vampire Spawn are elitist and may be very open to conversation, albeit, with the primary motivation of feeding on the PCs. They enjoy the chance of striking fear in anyone who is listening just to show how powerful they are. If PCs are knowledgeable, they may be able to offer information as to the location of another Vampire, or to reveal something about the Vampire Spawn's master. A deal may be struck for safe passage, or for an exchange of some sort—anything, so long as long as it benefits the Vampire Spawn's goal of becoming a true Vampire. PCs need to be very cautious though, as the Vampire Spawn is very much a killer, so any deceptions uncovered could end up backfiring on them.

Will-o'-Wisp

Minions of cultists and evil spellcasters

Frequency: 1-4

Setting: Temperate forests and marshes

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Size: Small (1 ft. ball of light)

Speed: Fast flying at 50 ft.

A Will-o'-Wisp disguises itself from a distance, mimicking a lantern, or torch light. It attempts to lure PCs close enough in order to strike, have them fall into traps, or to be attacked by hidden allies. They take advantage of their surroundings, preferring to attack at night or while obscured by heavy fog.

Tactics: Whenever possible, utilize their resistances and immunities, plus their movement speed and ability to use Invisibility whenever possible. With darkvision of 120 ft. they will more than likely see PCs well ahead of time. A Will-o'-Wisp has a high INT and WIS, so planning ahead is expected prior to any encounter with PCs.

Luring the PCs is their preferred option, especially if it means getting them close to traps or hidden allies. Within a few combat rounds a Will-o'-Wisp determines if the PCs are worth the trouble; deciding to stay and fight, or retreat and choose less powerful victims from whom to draw life. Their primary goal is to Consume Life from any PC reduced to 0 hit points, but if it means being destroyed they will wait for better opportunities. If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, they will attempt to Disengage and Dash.

Tips: If there are any PC clerics or paladins that can Turn Undead, attack them first. Move in and out of combat by attacking with Shock, then disengage and move vertically away 20 ft. The following round, move back into range and use Shock again.

PCs will be at disadvantage when using Acid, Cold, Fire, Necrotic, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from nonmagical attacks. Plus, Will-o'-Wisps have immunity to Lightning and Poison. Will-o'-Wisps have a relatively high AC as well, so the PC attack disadvantages will give them more rounds to cause havoc.

Non-combat resolution: PCs may discover that the Will-o'-Wisps can understand Common, but are unable to speak. If the PCs have any unconscious prisoners with them, they may be able to convince the Will-o'-Wisps to allow them passage and offer the prisoners as a gift so it can feast on their life force. There are clear moral implications with this strategy, especially for good PCs.

Zombie

Minions of a spellcaster who raised them from the dead.

Frequency: 1-20+

Setting: Ancient battlefields, tombs, graveyards and dungeons

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Size: Medium (6 ft. tall)

Speed: Relatively slow at 20 ft.

Zombies are essentially mindless animated bodies that have a powerful stench. Zombies have no recollection of their former lives and will simply stand in place if not under the control of a Master. Their singular purpose is to follow the basic instructions of their summoner - and that usually involves attacking whatever it can shamle towards.

Tactics: Zombies follow basic instructions from their summoner. This usually involves protecting an item, area, or similar. They are relentless and will pursue PCs until destroyed or until their Master commands otherwise.

Leverage Undead Fortitude to attack in waves. Multiple Zombies on PCs using Slam attacks could prove to be dangerous. There should be a sense of foreboding—a burden of overwhelming numbers—planting a seed of doubt in the minds of the PCs.

Tip: An experienced Master knows that Turn Undead has a range of 30 ft. Keep some Zombies back 40 ft. then use Dash to send in a small group to attack, engaging in melee combat. This positioning minimizes the number of Zombies affected by Turn Undead. A Master will send another wave of Zombies as needed and from as far away as 40 ft. using the Dash Action to engage PCs. Try to position smaller groups of Zombies out of the range of Turn Undead whenever possible.

Zombies are relentless and will not stop pursuing PCs once they are discovered. They will keep fighting until they are destroyed.

Unfettered Familiar

These wretched creatures were once servants of one or another mortal that summoned them through magical ritual. Their unnatural hues, sparkling eyes, or ability to speak distinguish them from other mundane beasts. Some can adopt a variety of forms - one day appearing as a bone-white cat, the next as a brilliantly vermillion toad. Their intriguing appearance belies a scheming nature and dark intellect. These familiars learned from their masters in secret, laying plans so that they would persist beyond the death of their mortal summoners. What they intend to do after their deaths is as varied as their myriad forms.

Stolen Soul.

The bond between familiar and arcanist is so great that some familiars become more than a simple magical creature. They develop complex personalities and secret ambitions. They fear the non-existence that awaits them when their master dies and so they scheme to make sure they do not simply fade away when this happens. Instead, they parasitize the bond they have with the creature that summoned it, clinging to the spectral remnants of the deceased spellcaster's spirit. With it they can summon the apparition of their former master in much the same way the familiar was itself once summoned, using this tormented spirit to grow their knowledge and in some ways surpass their masters.

Unfettered Familiar

Small fey, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (15 mage armor)

Hit Points 47 (9d8 + 7)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Darkvision 30 feet, passive Perception 13

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

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

Cantrips (at-will): *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *poison spray*

1st level (4 slots): *color spray*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step*, *ray of enfeeblement*

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

4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles*, *greater invisibility*

5th level (1 slot): *cloudkill*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Unfettered Familiar makes two melee attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 6 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Summon the Master. The Unfettered Familiar summons a Wraith in an adjacent unoccupied space. The Wraith is dismissed if the Unfettered Familiar is dead or unconscious, or when the wraith is reduced to 0 hit points. The Wraith can use its action to cast a spell that the unfettered familiar has prepared, using one of the Familiar's spell slots.

REACTIONS

Master's Shield. When the Unfettered Familiar is hit by an attack, it can transfer all of that damage to the Wraith it summoned with its Summon the Master ability.



LIVING GOLEM

Transmuted into flesh and blood, its mind awakened to sentience and free-will; this former golem still looks as if crudely carved from stone. It has a broad flat head and brutish arms far too large for its frame that gives away its origin. The large muscles across its back and chest bear a resemblance to carved stone and even its facial features appear as though roughly hewn from stone. From a distance, the hulking silhouette of this creature might appear indistinguishable from that of a stone golem.

Infantile Minds.

Though it appears as a fully grown adult, the mind of a Living Golem is newly awakened and much like that of a child. They understand whatever languages were used to command them as a golem, but often have some difficulty learning enough of those tongues to form new sentences. Complex thought, regulating their emotions, and controlling their impulses are all things that their minds must become accustomed to. Some never outgrow these limitations, coming across as brutish simpletons to those that cross paths with them.

Spiteful Ambitions.

Infantile fascination with the world quickly gives way to unbridled rage as others attempt to subject it to the life of servitude expected of an unthinking construct. Many wizards view them as little different from other golems. Some that even see them as sentient beings often try to direct and control them because of their lesser intelligence. When a living golem recognizes these attempts, it can fly into an uncontrolled tantrum.

Living Golem

Large humanoid, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 95 (10d12 + 30)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any one language (usually Common)

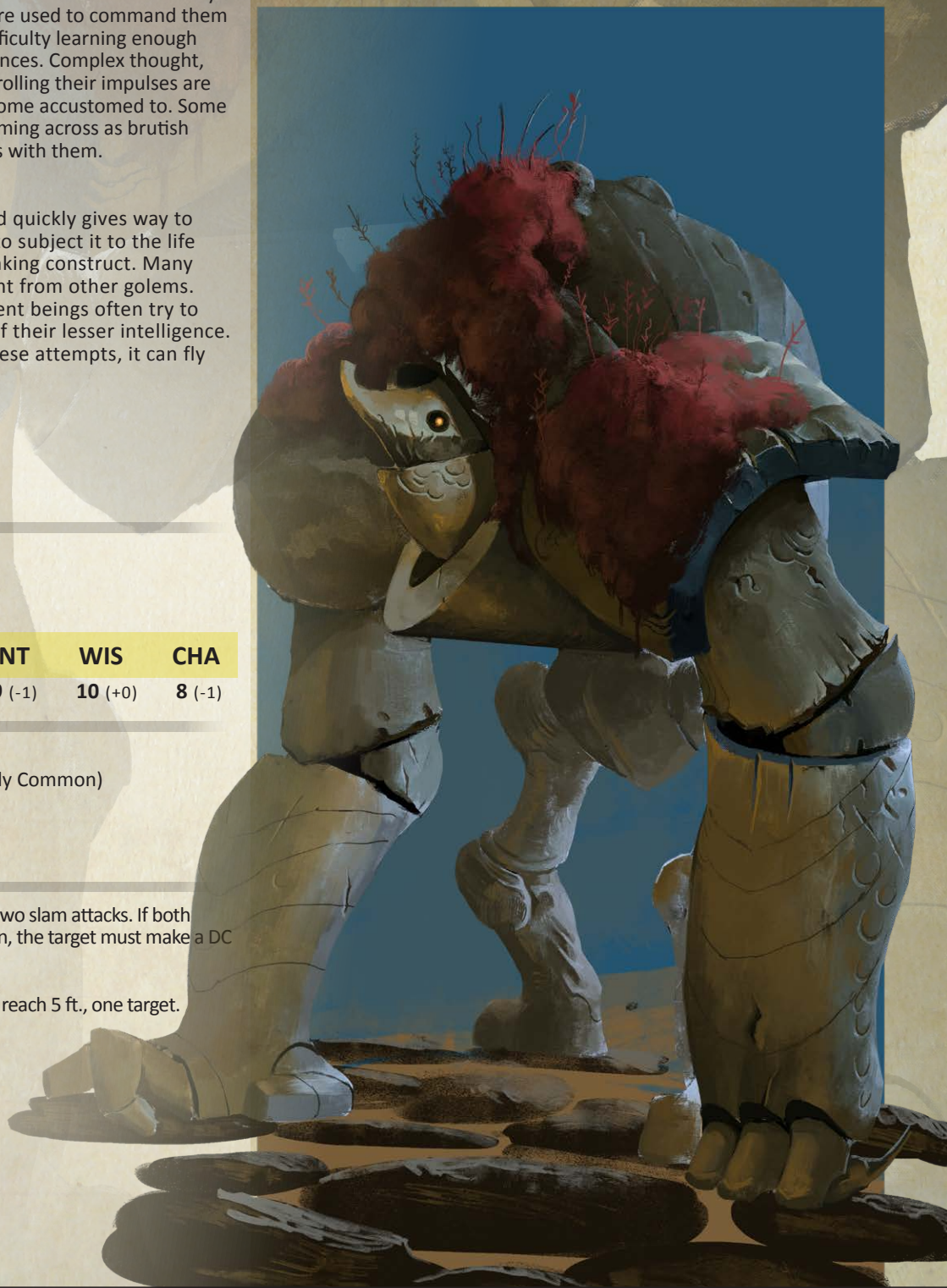
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Living Golem makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit the same creature on its turn, the target must make a DC 14 Dexterity save or fall prone.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.



ALKONOST

The Alkonost are avian beings of stunning appearance that build their roosts high atop secluded coastal cliffs. Fish and other sea creatures form the bulk of their diet, but they are also known to consume the bodies of those lost at sea. This bizarre practice is an essential part of their life cycle that also fuels an otherworldly ability to lull other creatures to peaceful slumber.

Ghastly Beauties.

Outwardly, the Alkonost appear as brightly plumed bird-like creatures. Most are covered from head to tail in long feathers that are vibrant blues, greens, and crimson colors. Their forearms are massive wings and their bulbous heads bear a wide, toothy beak. When this massive maw is opened, their true nature is revealed. Inside their mouth is a humanoid face, its eyes pale yellow or white and its expression locked in a tortured grimace. The mouth moves constantly, straining at the edge when the Alkonost begins to sing its feared lullaby.

Eaters of the Drowned.

Alkonost reproduce by laying eggs. Any Alkonost can lay an egg, but only after having recently consumed the corpse of a humanoid that has drowned at sea. They tend their eggs for several weeks before they hatch, and the younglings bear the faces of the dead inside their toothy mouths.

Coastal Terrors.

Veteran sailors fear the haunting melodies heard from the roosts of the Alkonost. Where such gatherings of Alkonost are known, these sailors give them wide berth. Once an Alkonost decides to harass a vessel, there is little to be done to dissuade it. They mercilessly sing the crew to sleep and chuckle gleefully as they push them into the sea, waiting for them to drown and give birth to the next generation.

Alkonost

Medium monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 41 (8d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Alkonost makes two attacks: one with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target
Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target
Hit: 6 (2d4 + 1) slashing damage.

Alluring Lullaby. The Alkonost sings an enchanting song. Every humanoid and giant within 300 feet of the Alkonost that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be incapacitated until the song ends. The Alkonost must take a bonus action on its subsequent turns to continue its song. It can end its song at any time, and the song ends automatically if the Alkonost is unable to take actions.

While incapacitated by the Alkonost's song, the target must move closer to the Alkonost on its turn. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks, but before moving into terrain that would damage it, and whenever it takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. A creature can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it. If the creature fails its saving throw three times, it falls unconscious, but can continue to make saving throws against this ability as normal.

A target that successfully saves is immune to this Alkonost's lullaby for the next 24 hours.



HAG SPAWN

Green hags are notorious in the delight they take in corrupting the joyful and youthful inhabitants around them. Their favorite nasty trick is to lure children into dark and dangerous woods with trails of tempting sweets. Many unspeakable fates await those unfortunate children that fall for this ruse, but a rare few are saved by the hag for a twisted ritual. The captive children are fed countless sweets as the hag slowly works a powerful curse. They then transform into dutiful servants that she can return to the world to help work her nefarious will.

Cloying Sweetness.

After their transformation, they look like prim and proper little children. Immaculately tidy, with not even a single hair out of place. Their clothing is unnaturally clean and bright. Their behavior is civil, refined, and possessed of quiet grace. They obey their parents and take to bed early without prompting. Most adults think them perfect children. There is a sorrow and profound tiredness within their dull eyes, hardly noticed except by other children and observant heroes. The only physical reveal of their corruption is just before the Hag Spawn attack. Their eyes turn to deep black and their skin becomes sickly green.

Treacle hearts.

The magical alchemy that creates a Hag Spawn child leaves behind a beating, black heart of molasses that pulses in time with the rhythm of the child's own heart. As long as the hag possess this treacle heart, it has total control over the Hag Spawn and it must obey her commands. Destroying this abhorrent confection ends the curse afflicting the child.

Hag Spawn

Small fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Hag Spawn makes two bite attacks or one bite and one grab or shove attack against the same target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Grab. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target is grappled, and slowed until it escapes the grapple.

Shove. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.



DEVIL BINDER

Many mortals are willing to go to desperate lengths to obtain power. Devil Binders are no exception to this trend. Through study or guile they have managed to bind a devil to their will. Across the breadth and depths of the planes they can call this devil into their presence, forcing its obedience and using it to shield them from harm. Some Devil Binders think themselves righteous stewards that have tamed the evil they command. While others are craven men who bargained their lives in a desperate attempt to seize power.

Truenames.

Many Devil Binders learn their craft as prestigious acolytes of upstanding religions. They desire to use the fragmentary knowledge of the languages the gods used to build the world, seeking to turn this divine lexicon into a means to subjugate or eradicate the devils that thwart the motives of the faithful. It can take years of research, but eventually their understanding of these fragmentary words of power allows them to use the truenames of devils to bind them to their will.

Corrupted Ambitions.

A successful summoning puts the Devil Binder in close proximity with creatures that delight in tempting and corrupting mortals. Inevitably, this power corrupts even the most noble. Devils ensnared by the binding of their truenames delight in slowly working to twist the ambitions of their captors. They gradually embolden their captors towards subtly selfish acts that hasten their fall from grace. Some Devil Binders foolishly think they can outwit the malign influence of the devils they believe they have tamed. All eventually learn that such efforts are ultimately futile.

Devil Binder

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, Religion +13

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages any six languages

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

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

Innate Spellcasting. The Devil Binder's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *bane, blindness/deafness, charm, sacred flame*
3/day each: *bestow curse, dispel magic, flame strike, hellish rebuke, polymorph*

ACTIONS

Word of Command. The Devil Binder chooses one devil it has summoned or a creature it has charmed and the target uses its reaction to make a melee weapon attack against an adjacent creature chosen by the Devil Binder.

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (6d6) bludgeoning damage.

Summon Devil (1/day). The Devil Binder summons 1d4 devils, whose total CR is 9 or lower, into unoccupied spaces within 30 feet. A summoned devil disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the Devil Binder drops to 0 hit points. The devils roll initiative as a group, but each has its own turn. They obey any verbal commands issued by the Devil Binder (no action required for commands). If the Devil Binder does not issue commands, summoned devils attack the nearest hostile creature.

REACTIONS

Word of Transference. When the Devil Binder takes damage from an attack, it can use its reaction to transfer all of that damage to a devil it has summoned. The summoned devil must be within 60 feet of the Devil Binder.



GOBLIN KENNEL MASTER

Raising a worg pup is a difficult and dangerous prospect. Yet, some goblin tribes can have several dozens of these beasts amongst their ranks. The kennel masters with the thankless task of tending to a pack of worgs can have decades of experience, giving them an understanding of these evil predators that is unrivaled among goblinkind. Kennel masters hold an uncommon amount of prestige within their tribe. Rarely do they take to the field of combat, instead they teach other goblins how to work with and ride the worgs. When, in desperation, a kennel master is called to arms, they fight with frightening ferocity alongside their worgs. Their master by their side, the worgs surround foes and harry them with an unrelenting barrage of attack at the command of the kennel master.

Keeper of the Worgs.

A goblin kennel master is rarely, if ever, found without the pack of worgs that it has raised from birth. Worgs are a prized symbol of strength and as such are treated incredibly well by the goblins in most circumstances. There are, of course, exceptions. While some worgs might bristle under the reigns of a goblin rider, they almost unfailingly heed the call of a veteran kennel master.



Goblin Kennel Master

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 24 (5d6 + 7)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Goblin, Worg

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Coordinated Assault. When the goblin kennel master makes an attack against a creature, one worg adjacent to the target can make a melee attack against the same target without using an action.

Nimble Escape. The goblin kennel master can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Pack Tactics. The goblin kennel master has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of his allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Release the Hounds (Recharge 5 - 6). The goblin kennel master chooses two worgs that can hear him and that he can see within 90 feet. These worgs can then use their reaction to move up to 25 feet and make a melee attack against a creature of their choice.



JAELLA THISTLEBRIAR

Jaella operates a charitable organization that tends to the needs of orphaned children. The public often calls her *"The Mother"*, both for this act of generosity and for her unremarkable—some might say matronly—appearance. Most fail to recognize her at public functions; her wardrobe and manners appear so demure and unassuming. This persona is merely a facade for her other activities. Secretly, she is a skilled assassin at the head of a syndicate of killers that spans the borders of many neighboring lands. The services she offers as a paid killer allow her to act as a public benefactor to the children that she rescues, who in turn grow up to work for her.

"No one expects greatness from children. When you do, that is exactly what they give you."

Though her craft is cruel, Jaella truly loves the children she cares for. She spares no expense seeing to their education and growth, and the children thrive under her watch. The best become her informants, given the opportunity to earn the right to be trained as assassins. Should they master that craft, she sends them off to neighboring lands to found their own guilds.

"I'm afraid that is outside of the purview of our typical contract."



For Jaella, the contract is the final arbiter of decisions. She carefully crafts each one, attentive to their every detail, and makes sure that they are carried out explicitly to the letter. She performs routine audits of the contracts throughout her extended network as well. Her pupils know better than to manipulate their services or contracts and on the rare occasions that this happens, agents are severely punished. For the right price, there are few contracts she would refuse, once they were properly arranged of course.

Jaella Thistlebriar, The Mother

Small humanoid (halfling), neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +6, Perception +4, Stealth +11

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elven, Draconic, Dwarvish, Halfling, Gnomish, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Assassinate. During her first turn, Jaella has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit she scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Brave. Jaella has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Evasion. If Jaella is subjected to an effect that allows her to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, she instead takes no damage when she succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if she fails.

Lucky. When Jaella rolls a 1 on an attack, ability check, or saving throw, she can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Nimble. Jaella can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than her and can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of her turns.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Jaella deals an extra 13 (4d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jaella makes two dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

FENTON GREYCASTLE

Fenton Greycastle is thin, disheveled, and bedecked with a variety of scavenged and piecemeal equipment. A human barely into adulthood, Fenton looks much older as a result of countless failed attempts at launching his adventuring career. Undaunted, he continues to press on, often aligning himself with extremely unsavory types. He has apprenticed himself to dark wizards, worked with warlords attempting to recruit goblin armies, and even tried his hand at being part of an orc horde. Though hapless and unscrupulous, he is well aware that his failed exploits have put him in a unique position to inform on the villainous personages he has worked for. Most days, he is found offering this service to others from the shadowy comfort of dark alleyways.

"Psst. You're looking for information right? I know who it is and I know where to find them. See, I was working for them until I found out what they were doing."

Fenton seldom waits for opportunity to find him. When new adventurers come to town, he makes sure to solicit their attention. He doesn't always truthfully know what is happening. Odds are good that whatever he has been doing, it has been part of a nefarious plot unfolding behind his back. At least, that is what he tries to convince others.

"I would love to help you out! You seem incredibly capable—I could learn a lot from you. You find treasure though, right? I think I ought to keep a share for all my hard work."



Few things motivate Fenton more than coin. He has followed countless would-be adventurers into danger in pursuit of monetary reward. Most don't have his natural luck. When those he has allied himself begin to fall in battle, Fenton turns tail and runs. If overwhelmed by numbers, he gladly pretends to be dead and waits until the circumstances favor his escape. Should his temporary companions succeed, he wastes no time in calculating what share of the spoils are his thanks to his important contributions to the group.

Fenton Greycastle

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 11 (2d6 +5)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common and Thieves' Cant

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Spellcasting. Fenton is a 1st-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Fenton has the following warlock spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *friends*, *produce flame*
1st level (2 slots): *expeditious retreat*, *protection from evil and good*

Dumb Luck. When Fenton rolls a 1 on an attack, he treats it instead as a hit. The attack deals only half damage.

ACTIONS

Short sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

Craven. When an attack roll misses Fenton, he can use his reaction to move up to his speed. He does not provoke opportunity attacks when he uses this feature.

Play Dead. When Fenton takes damage that reduces him to 5 hit points or less, he can use his reaction to appear dead. For the next 10 minutes, or until he takes any other action, Fenton appears dead to all outward inspection and to spells used to determine the status of a creature.

DANEK “GRIMJAW” IRONSPAR

The Burning Axe of Red Rock is owned and operated by a former member of the Argent Shield adventuring company. Most know the dwarven proprietor of this illustrious inn and tavern by the name Grimjaw. Danek Ironspar, called *Grimjaw* for the wicked scar that splits his lower lip down to his chin, was once one of the fearless warriors that comprised the host of adventurers known as the Argent Shield.

Years of punishing combat had taken its toll on his body and he retired some three decades ago. Korgan Felldour, Danek's partner, and another former member of the Argent Shield retired with him. The two invested in a number of ventures and businesses together, including the Burning Axe. Korgan handles the books and brewing for the tavern, but it is Danek's presence—more so his outlandish tales—for which the Burning Axe is known.

"Most folk think that adventuring is all fighting orcs and killing dragons. They never see the truly dread things we fight to keep from the lands of men. I can tell you of many."

Danek is easy to spot inside his tavern. His right hand is lifeless stone—an injury sustained decades ago in one of the remarkable stories he tells to his favored patrons. As he busies himself clearing tables and talking with patrons, that hand hangs at his side, an empty stein or dirty rag tucked beneath his arm. Though he feels little remorse in having left his courageous life of adventure behind, he is extremely prideful of his exploits. He takes overwhelming pleasure in telling the fabulous tales of his days spent crawling through dark dungeons and battling nefarious wizards. Many of his patrons know how easy it is to distract this aging dwarf with simple questions about the heroics of his glory days. Coin is nice and all, but the real currency of the land is in the secrets. The ones buried ages ago with the dead. They are why wars are fought and how forgotten gods return.

Danek secretly maintains contact with several organizations and individuals that he knew in his former life as a stalwart adventurer. On occasion he helps to provide information between parties, or sets troubled young adventuring companies back on their feet, never letting word of his activities reach Korgan. More than once, these secrets have threatened both the tavern and his relationship with his partner. Danek has so far been resourceful enough to avoid major catastrophe. His affection for Korgan only modestly tempers his desire to continue to meddle in affairs. Danek suspects that Korgan may know some of what he is up to, but fears that revealing the full extent of his dealings may cause Korgan to leave him.

Danek “Grimjaw” Ironspar

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral good

Armor Class 17 (chain mail, shield)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 +45)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Resistances poison

Saving Throws Str +7, Con +6

Skills Athletics +10, Insight +7

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Halfling, Gnomish

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Dwarven Resilience. Danek has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Stonecunning. Danek has a +12 bonus to Intelligence (History) checks related to the origin of stonework.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Danek makes three melee attacks.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d8 + 7) slashing damage, or 13 (1d10 + 7) slashing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.



Canister of the Captive Mind

Wondrous item, very rare

This large glass jar is sealed on both ends by silver caps that refuse to open. Inside, a clear, amber liquid is streaked with swirls of a viscous pinkish-purple substance. As an action, you can speak the command word and cast the spell *dominate person*, with a duration of concentration up to 1 hour, on any living creature that you can see within 60 feet. While the target is charmed, a duplicate version of its brain is held within the canister. Anyone holding it gains the benefits of the telepathic link from the spell and can issue commands to the target. The canister can be broken if it is dropped, or thrown against a hard surface, ending the spell early if the target's duplicate brain was still inside.



Doppelganger's Cowl

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This leather cowl is made from the hide of a doppelganger. While you wear this cowl with the its hood up, you can use an action at will to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid you have seen. Your statistics, other than your size, are the same in each form. Any equipment you are wearing or carrying isn't transformed. You revert to original form if you are unconscious or if you use an action to do so.

A creature familiar with the humanoid you have polymorphed into can discover that you are an imposter with a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check.



Lash of the Master

Weapon (whip), uncommon (requires attunement)

When you hit a creature with this magic weapon, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or use their reaction to attack an adjacent creature of your choice.

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